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DIME NOVELS



THE TONKAWA SPY.

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DIME NOVEL, NUMBER 294,

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OR,

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Joseph D. Estrie

THE TONKAWA SPY.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE AGUA DULCE.

It was in the southwestern part of Texas, less than half a day's ride from the river Nueces, and near the end of the year 1835.

A party of about thirty horsemen, most of whose faces indicated Anglo-Saxon descent, was riding northward on the Matamoras road. All were well-armed, although there was little in the way of uniform, or in their style of marching, to induce the belief that they were connected with an army. They appeared to be, in fact, a mere straggling band of armed men. And yet, whether they deserved the name of soldiers, or whether they did not, they had proved that they could fight, having successfully contended, on several fields, against Mexican regulars.

It was not yet a month since the Texans had taken the town of San Antonio de Bexar from the Mexican army under General Cos. These men had borne a part in that memorable struggle, and formed a portion of a party that had left San Antonio on an expedition against Matamoras. After the expedition started, nearly all the men had been taken away by General Houston; but the leaders daringly pressed on with the remainder, hoping to join Colonel Fannin, who was supposed to be somewhere on the coast, with about one thousand men. The small force had divided on the way, half of them, under Colonel Johnson, remaining at San Patricio, on the Nueces, while the others, under Grant, went southward to look for horses, with which to mount Fannin's men.

The detachment had had good success. Near the Rio Grande they overtook fifty Mexican dragoons, with several hundred horses in charge, driving them across the river, and captured many of the horses. With these they had reached the Agua Dulce, a small stream not far from the Nueces, had

crossed that stream, and were hastening to join their comrades, when the expedition suddenly came to a disastrous termination.

Colonel Grant and two other men were riding half a mile in advance of their comrades, and between them and the main body was the cavallada of captured horses. No scouts or spies were out, as the party had no reason to apprehend any danger.

Suddenly, as they were passing between two mottes, or groves of timber, several hundred dragoons came out on each side and surrounded both men and horses. Before the party could think of defense or flight, they found themselves inclosed by more than a thousand Mexicans, under the command of General Urrea.

Finding themselves "corraled," the Texans could only determine to sell their lives dearly, and even for that their chance was a poor one. The overwhelming body of Mexicans closed in upon them, firing their escopetas and charging with their lances, and the fight, if that name can be given to the slaughter, was soon ended. Colonel Grant and one of his companions bravely but rashly rode back to the assistance of their friends, and the dragoons opened their ranks to let them come into the corral. Finding themselves the only survivors of the party, they then attempted to escape, but were soon overtaken, and Grant was killed, and his companion was wounded and captured. The rest were scattered upon the ground between the two mottes, and the Mexicans took pleasure in insulting and mutilating the bodies of the slain.

At the side of the road lay Major Morris, a fine-looking, middle-aged gentleman, who had been struck by an escopeta ball, and transfixed by a lance as he was falling from his horse. In addition to these wounds, he had been stunned by falling on his head, and lay there senseless, if not actually dead.

A Mexican officer, gaudily dressed, rode up and dismounted near the body. He was a swarthy, dark-haired man, of about the same age as Major Morris, and not ill-looking, though there was a very unpleasant expression on his countenance as he gazed at the fallen Texan.

"I was not mistaken," said the officer. "It is he, and he

is dead. So perish all the enemies of Mexico ! And so perish all the enemies of Francisco Aguerre ! I will search him before he is stripped by the men. Who knows what I might find upon him !”

He knelt by the body, and proceeded to “go through” the pockets, drawing out a few articles of little value, and then a small miniature on ivory, at which he gazed with a look of mingled affection and ferocity.

“It is Ysabel !” he exclaimed. “Ah, the robber ! He has paid the penalty for stealing a daughter of Mexico.”

The next article that the officer found interested him yet more than the miniature. It was a small package of papers, wrapped in a piece of buck-skin, and tied with a thong of the same. Upon this Colonel Aguerre pounced eagerly, and his black eyes flashed as he untied the package. A single glance at the paper satisfied him.

“It is the land-grant. Yes ; here is the signature of Governor Garcia. Ah ! this makes me secure. I will now be able to persuade Ysabel and her child to return to Mexico, if we do not capture them during this war. What ! is the fellow alive yet ?”

It was hardly possible that there could be any life in a man with a bullet-hole through his side and an ugly lance-wound in his breast ; but the Mexican had thought that he saw the body stir. He pushed it with his foot, but there was no sign of life or motion. He wrapped the papers in the buck-skin, tied them with a thong, and carefully placed them in an inner pocket of his uniform coat. Then he mounted his horse and rode away, leaving the body to be stripped by his greedy and cowardly followers.

When he had gone, the wounded man opened his eyes, and groaned heavily.

A few feet from Major Morris lay an Indian, stripped to the buff, with nothing on him but his breech-cloth, leggins and moccasins. He, also, was apparently dead ; but there was no blood near him, and, if he had been closely examined, no wound could have been found. He was lying motionless, as if without life, but his right hand grasped a knife, and his keen eyes were watching for an enemy.

As Morris groaned, the Indian raised his head and crawled toward him.

"Are you bad hurt, Major Bob?" he asked.

"What, Placidor! You alive! I am dying. Can you get away?"

"Hope so."

"If you do, tell my wife that Colonel Aguerre was here and that he robbed me of my land papers; but she must never go to Mexico."

These words were uttered in a feeble tone and with great effort. As soon as they had been spoken, the blood burst from the dying soldier's wounds and flowed from his mouth, and the next moment he breathed his last.

Placidor laid down again as a Mexican dragoon approached the spot. The dragoon was engaged in the congenial occupation of plundering and stripping the dead, and was on foot, leading his horse. When he came to where the Indian was lying, there was a look of fear and hatred in his face.

"An Indian!" he exclaimed, in Spanish. "Ah, the serpent! He does not look like a dead man, and he may be living. But I will make sure."

He raised his escopeta to dash out the brains of the Indian; but Placidor was watching him, and darted from the ground like a snake out of its coil. With a powerful blow, he struck his knife deep into the Mexican's side. The next instant he seized the horse, mounted, and galloped away toward the north.

The action was seen by the Mexicans, and a shower of bullets was sent after the daring fugitive; but he had thrown himself on the side of the horse, which he was urging to its utmost speed, and presented scarcely any mark to the dragoons. In fact, with their bell mouthed escopetas and weak contract powder, they were unable even to hit the horse.

They put speed to their steeds, and dashed forward in pursuit. As they were excellent horsemen, the chase was an exciting one, and the chances seemed to be about even; but the Indian was also a good horseman, and knew how to take advantage of the country, and employ every art that could facilitate his escape.

As he rode he managed to free his horse from the heavy,

cumbersome and tightly girthed Mexican saddle. Rid of this incumbrance, and with the frightful yells of the Indian stimulating him to greater speed, the animal led his pursuers a rapid race until he reached the Nueces, where the animal dropped down, unable to go a step further. The Indian at once flung himself into the water, and swam across, undisturbed by the bullets that the Mexicans sent after him as they came to the bank.

He reached the other side in safety, turned and made a gesture of defiance, and then disappeared in the timber.

CHAPTER II.

MAY MORRIS AND HER AFFAIRS.

FOUR years and more have passed since Major Morris was killed at the slaughter of Agua Dulce.

During that period the people of Texas have achieved their independence of Mexico, and have formed a free republic, recognized as such by the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, France, and Holland. Emigration is rapidly increasing the population of the new country, and the citizens of the republic have nothing to fear from any foreign power. They dwell in peace and security.

At a short distance from the small town of Linville, on Lavaca Bay, is situated a cottage, small, but neat and comfortable, shaded by trees and embowered in blossoms. It looks out, across the sandy beach, upon the glistening waters of the bay. The south wind is always wandering about it, as if loth to leave such a pleasant precinct. The birds are more fearless there, as well as more plentiful, and they sing more sweetly, than near any other house in the neighborhood. Children love the place, too, and groups of them frequently come out from the village, and they and the birds together make such music as might bring youth back to the heart of an old man.

It is a little paradise of a place, where you might naturally expect to find angels.

And there are angels there, or such beings as may easily be mistaken for angels at a little distance. There they are, two of them, seated on a bench, under a dark-leaved magnolia tree.

As you approach them you discover that one of them, at least, is a mortal; but the illusion concerning the other one does not so easily vanish.

The one who has been discovered to be a mortal is a tall woman, who would gladly be called young, but is evidently beyond any suspicion of juvenility. Her form is not incumbered by too much flesh, and her face is not only lean but slightly wrinkled. In her brown hair there are streaks of gray, and she has that prim and staid appearance which is generally supposed to indicate an old maid.

The other may be seventeen or eighteen, and is as beautiful as one of those velvet roses that blossom on the bushes near her. Whatever her age may be, she is a full-grown woman, having been born of a Mexican mother, and having ripened under a southern sun. Her southern descent manifests itself in her black hair, her large, dark eyes, her peachy cheeks, and her rich, red lips. As you look at her, you feel inclined to retract the supposition of mortality, and to vote her an angel.

The elder of these two is Miss Eliza Satterlee, teacher of the village school at Linville, and the younger is her assistant. The name of the assistant is May Morris, and she is the only child of that Major Morris who lay dead on the field at Agua Dulce. She is an orphan now, as the wife of Major Morris survived him but little more than a year.

Mrs. Morris left but little of this world's wealth behind her, and it was not long until May found herself so near destitution that she was glad to accept the offer of Miss Satterlee, who asked her to become her assistant in teaching the Linville school. The two teachers got on together very well, and the bargain was a good one for Miss Satterlee, as there could be no doubt that her school owed much of its popularity to the attractiveness of May Morris.

As they sat there, talking and looking out on the bay, a young man came riding down the bend, from the direction of Linville—riding slowly and saunteringly; and looking every

way except at the cottage, as if he had not the faintest idea of stopping at that place, or was not even aware of its existence. When he came opposite to it, however, he stopped his horse suddenly, as if he had just thought of something, dismounted with an appearance of hesitation, and looked rather sheepish as he hitched his horse and entered the gate.

These indications lead to the supposition that he was the lover of somebody in this little paradise.

"If there isn't Tom Labar!" exclaimed Miss Satterlee, with the least bit of a scream, as the rider dismounted. "He is coming in here, of course. I will get up and go to the house, May."

"What would you do that for, you unreasonable creature?"

The dark eyes opened wide in wonder, though May knew well enough what Miss Satterlee meant.

"Because he is coming to see you, and will want to see you alone. When I was your age, I was always glad to be left alone with my beaux."

Or would have been, it may not be unbecoming to hint, if she had had any beaux.

"What nonsense! You shall stay right here, you provoking girl. Tom Labar has seen us sitting here, and is coming to call on us both. If he should want to see me alone it is not likely that I would encourage his desire."

From these circumstances it may be supposed that May Morris was the somebody whom the rider loved.

But nobody could have any cause to surmise such a thing from the nonchalant manner in which he approached and saluted the two ladies, manifestly paying attention to Eliza Satterlee in preference to May, and insisting upon it that that elderly lady should remain, when she said that she had an errand at the house. Of course not. These young lovers are so artful that they are able to deceive everybody; they can defy the universe to discover that they are in love. Certainly.

"I saw your friend, the Tonkawa, up town, May," he said, after some desultory conversation.

"Placidor? What was he doing there?"

"He was buying ammunition, and getting ready to go to Mexico."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; he said that he told you he was going to Mexico."

"I know it; but I hoped that I had persuaded him not to go."

"Why should you? Do you suppose he could accomplish nothing for you there?"

"I don't know. It is possible that he might; but I should not wish him to run such a risk for me."

"He is not the only one who would gladly run a risk for you. I wish you would tell me all about that matter, May. I have heard a little, but nothing definite. I only know that there are some papers in Mexico which you ought to have, and that you would be rich if you had your rights. I wish you would tell me more about it."

"I will tell you, if you will promise not to interfere in the matter. I don't want people to neglect their business and run into danger for me."

"That is a hard condition; but I will promise to do nothing without your permission."

"Very well."

The story that May Morris told concerned her father and mother and one other person, principally, and perhaps a few others incidentally.

Major Morris had come to Texas with Moses Austin, by permission of the Mexican government. He had gone to Mexico with Austin, and had eventually obtained a grant of land on the Lavaca, three leagues in length by one in breadth.

This was not all he gained by his journey to Mexico. He had seen Ysabel Aguerre, the daughter of a proud, if not a wealthy, Mexican family, and to see her was to love her. He soon discovered that his love was returned, but there were serious obstacles in the way of marriage. Not only were her parents naturally opposed to her union with an *Americano del Norte*; but they had already betrothed her to her cousin, Francisco Aguerre, an officer in the Mexican army.

These were impediments that could not be removed in a manner that would be peaceful and agreeable to all parties; but Morris knew that Ysabel's detestation of her cousin was only surpassed by her love for himself, and he took his own way out of the difficulty. He cut all the knots at once by

stealing the lady of his love, and carrying her to Texas, where he married her when he had placed himself beyond pursuit.

Circumstances were such that it was a long time before he could get his grants confirmed, and there were still some formalities to be attended to in the eventful year 1835. He had gone to Austin to complete these, when the people of Texas, vowing that they would no longer submit to oppression, declared their independence, and flew to arms in defense of their liberties. Morris, with his papers on his person, hastened to San Antonio, and took part in its siege and capture.

After the surrender of General Cos, he joined the expedition under Grant and Johnson, against Matamoras, which terminated so disastrously. Francisco Aguerra, who was a colonel in Urrea's division of the Mexican army, had searched him when he lay dead or dying on the field, and had found and taken his papers, including the land-grant.

The father and mother of Ysabel Morris were both dead, at the commencement of the Texan revolution, and Francisco Aguerra, in the absence of any other claimant, succeeded to their estate. He sent a messenger to Mrs. Morris, requesting her to return to Mexico, to her home and her relatives. There was a strong temptation in this, as the widow found herself nearly penniless and without a protector; but Placidor, a friendly Tonkawa Indian, had escaped the slaughter at Agua Dulce, and brought to Mrs. Morris the last message of her husband, which was to the effect that she should not allow herself to be persuaded to visit Mexico. His wish was sacred, and her own good sense told her that it would not be safe to trust herself to the tender mercies of her cousin.

As she died soon after this, no further attempt could be made to influence her, and Colonel Aguerra turned his attentions to her daughter May. He dispatched a second messenger to her, inviting her to come to Mexico, and promising not only to put her in possession of her ancestral estate, but to restore to her her father's land title. Young as May was, she regarded this proposition as the height of impudence. It was a strange way, as she remarked to her friend, Eliza Satterlee, of restoring stolen property, and she thought that Colonel Aguerra, if he really meant her well, might easily have sent the papers by the messenger who carried his invitation.

She regarded his request as the fly should have regarded that of the spider when invited to walk into his parlor, and was quite unwilling to trust herself in a place from which she might not be allowed to return.

She returned a polite reply, however, to Colonel Aguerra, alleging the difficulties of the journey as an excuse for not accepting his invitation, and requested him to forward to her the papers of her father that were in his possession. But Colonel Aguerra did nothing of the kind. He was evidently not disposed to transact business in that way.

Placidor had been devotedly attached to Major Morris, who had once saved his life at the risk of his own, and had transferred his attachment to the daughter on the death of the father. Lately, as she told Tom Labar, the Tonkawa had come to her and announced his intention of going to Mexico for the purpose of trying to get possession of the papers that had been stolen from her father. She had endeavored to persuade him not to do so, but, as it appeared, without effect. She did not know what he could do, or how he expected to accomplish his purpose, but judged that he intended to get the Mexican into his power by some strategy, and force him to surrender the stolen property.

"I believe that something might be done in that way," said Labar. "Where does Colonel Aguerra live?"

"In Nueva Leon, not far from Monterey, on the Rio Alamo."

"I wish you would let me go with Placidor."

"You must not think of such a thing. The chance of accomplishing any thing is too small, and the enterprise is too hazardous. You must stay here and take care of me."

"You have only to say the word, and I will gladly take care of you as long as we both may live."

And that brought on a conversation which need not be detailed here.

CHAPTER III.

COLONEL AGUERRA'S PLOT.

PLACIDOR had fully determined to go to Mexico. As the crusading warriors of olden days were wont to pay their respects at the shrines of their favorite saints before seeking the sands of Arabia, so the Tonkawa was bound to visit May Morris before beginning his journey.

To do honor to the occasion, he had consented to compromise with the requirements of civilization by wearing a cotton coat, which did not contrast very strangely with the savage attire to which he still clung. He had seriously meditated a straw hat, but abandoned the idea on the first trial of the incumbrance.

May was glad to see him. He had been her father's friend, he wanted to be her friend, he was willing to peril his life for her, and she had the heart to appreciate his devotion. If she was glad, Placidor was overjoyed. In the sunlight of her smiles his savage nature burst into blossoms of unselfish desire and heroic resolve. He was as gentle as a dove when she spoke to him kindly, and had the wisdom of a serpent when there was a chance to serve her. It was her influence, as well as the memory of her father, that had partially weaned the Tonkawa from the wilderness, and had made him a valuable assistant to the white men in times of Indian incursions. He had invented a name for her, which was a compound of her own name and her dead father's title, and he always felt himself well rewarded for any daring or skillful deed when he received an approving word from "Miss Mayjor."

He had only come to say good-by ; but May would not allow him to depart without remonstrating with him and endeavoring to dissuade him from his purpose. Her efforts were in vain, as he had made up his mind that he might be able to serve her interests.

"What can you do?" persisted May. "You are going among a strange people, whose language you do not understand."

"Placidor can talk Mexicano, Miss Mayjor."

In fact, the Tonkawa was quite a linguist. He not only knew the dialects of his own people and the Comanches, but had become a proficient in English, and had picked up a great deal of Spanish while he was a prisoner in the Comanche country.

"You would not know the papers if you should see them," suggested May.

"Aguerra know 'em. Placidor make him tell."

"They will catch you and kill you. I am afraid for you, and don't want you to go to Mexico."

"Don't be 'fraid for Placidor. He will come back to see Miss Mayjor. Wouldn't miss that for heap."

May sung a song for her half-tamed friend, and Placidor went away satisfied.

"He is a fine-looking savage, though he is so horridly dressed," said Miss Satterlee, as she looked after the retiring form of the Tonkawa.

"He has a good heart, and he is very good to me," replied May.

"I don't know how it is, May, that you so easily win the hearts of all who come near you. Here are two men who would willingly die for you."

"Perhaps the women would not be so willing."

"I know of one who would. I believe that I could die to serve you, my darling."

"Let us hope, Eliza, that your affection will never be put to such a severe test."

Within two weeks after his interview with May Morris, Placidor had crossed the Rio Grande, and was in the Mexican State of New Leon.

It was not in the character of one of the *Indios bravos*, or wild Indians, that he appeared in that country. He wore the scanty and coarse clothing, and had adopted the shuffling gait and downcast look of one of the Indian laborers of the provinces. There were many such, and Placidor, with his knowledge of Spanish, passed as one of the poor creatures without any difficulty.

The Tonkawa easily found the residence of Colonel Aguer-
ra, who was a man of note and official position in the pro-

vince. It was situated on a little river, some forty miles from the frowning walls of Monterey. Here was the Hacienda Aguerra, and both the mansion and its grounds were luxurious, considering that they were in the Mexican style and taste. The flat-roofed house was substantially constructed of stone, and was situated in the midst of a garden of flowers and fruit and shade trees, with ponds and fountains pleasantly scattered among the vegetation of the tropical and temperate zones. In front was the river, nearly concealed by the abundant growth of trees and vines, and behind was a dense thicket of chaparral, which Placidor used as a hiding place, and whence he issued, at such times as he chose, to spy about the place, and to watch for an opportunity of pouncing upon Colonel Aguerra at an unguarded moment.

It was near the close of June, and the day had just ended. The great heat was over, though the air was still oppressive, and over the earth hung a heavy haze.

On a piazza at the side of the hacienda, reclining in cool arm-chairs of cane, sat Colonel Aguerra and his son Ramon, enjoying their cigarritas.

It must be confessed that Ramon Aguerra had not been born in wedlock ; but that was a matter of small consequence in Mexico, and his father could not have loved him more or treated him better if he had been the child of a union that was blessed by the church and sanctioned by the law. He intended to make Ramon his heir, and also desired, through him, to keep the Aguerra estate in his own family, and perhaps add to it some valuable acres in another quarter. Ramon, like his father, was not an ill-looking man ; but the expression of his countenance was not such as generally speaks of a pure heart and a noble spirit.

The matter upon which they were conversing was a private and confidential one ; but they spoke freely and openly, as none of the servants were near, and they had no reason to suppose that they could be overheard, not knowing that within a few feet of them, behind a clump of azalea bushes, was concealed a copper colored spy, whose quick ears were open to catch every word that was spoken.

"Has the arrangement with the Indians been finally concluded?" asked the young man.

"Yes; the bargain was made some time ago, and Pinolo, the Comanche chief, has given his word, which may be relied upon. He will leave the mountains with a large force of warriors, some four or five hundred, about the new moon in August, and will strike down into Texas as far as the coast, making a clean sweep as they go. On our part we have agreed to invade Texas with a large army, and to join them at Victoria."

"Will that be done? I have heard nothing of it, and there are no signs of preparation for such an enterprise."

"Of course it will not be done. Those Texans are devils, and we have no intention of rushing into a war with them. Our promise was only given for the purpose of inducing the Comanches to make a foray."

"We will allow the Indians to keep their promise, then, while we will break ours?"

Colonel Aguerra raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders in the manner of a Frenchman.

"Certainly, my son. What would you have? That is an advantage which we possess over them. We can not treat those barbarians as if they were civilized people."

"They will be very angry when they find themselves disappointed, and perhaps they will try to take vengeance upon us."

"I hope not. We will trump up some excuse that must satisfy them."

"And of what benefit will the foray be to us?"

"It will benefit us in more than one way. Those devils of Texans will be killed, and plundered, and frightened, and emigration from the United States will be stopped, and then I will get the daughter of my cousin Ysabel."

"That will be something, indeed. How is it to be accomplished?"

"There are Mexicans among the Comanches, who were captured long ago, and who have been with the Indians until they do not wish to return to their own country. With one of these I have made a bargain, and have promised to pay him well when he puts me in possession of May Morris, as they call the daughter of my cousin Ysabel. The Comanche chief will have nothing to do with this matter, and can

not interfere with it if he should be angry with the Mexican people."

"That is a good plan, and I do not see why it should not be carried out to your satisfaction. What do you propose to do with the fair cousin when you get her?"

"I expect to marry her to you. It is not possible that you will object to the match, as Yanez, whom I sent to invite her to visit me, says that she is the most beautiful woman on the earth."

"Yanez has not seen all the women on on the earth. Besides, she may be a vixen."

"It is not probable. Those beautiful women are not shrews. If she were, her fortune would make amends for her character."

"What fortune has she?"

"Is she not the heiress of the Aguerra estate?"

"I thought it was ours."

"We have no right but that of possession. We are only living on it by sufferance."

"By whose sufferance? Not by hers, surely. It can not be supposed that the government of Mexico will take the property from us and give it to an alien and enemy, or the daughter of an enemy."

"Perhaps not. We are safe as long as the present government continues in power and I retain my influence with those at the head of affairs; but we have no legal title. Another government may arise, with which I may be powerless; the girl from Texas may present her claim for the property of her ancestors, and it may be adjudged in her favor. Against these chances—and they are something more than chances—I propose to fortify by getting possession of the girl and marrying her to you. I hope you do not object to the arrangement."

"By no means. I only hope that nothing may occur to prevent you from carrying your plan into effect. The girl may object to marrying me."

"Her objections will be useless. We can easily manage that. There is more to be gained than the Aguerra estate. The girl's father was granted a large and valuable tract of land in Texas; but I have the grant, and she can only get it

through me. When you marry her, you can secure that property also."

"I'm getting impatient. You say that the Indians are to begin their foray at about the new moon, in August. It is near the time of the new moon now."

"It is probable that the Comanches are already on their way to the coast. What was that noise? Did you hear it, Ramon?"

"I thought I heard a slight rustling. Some night-bird, I suppose."

The slight rustling was caused by an uneasy movement of the Tonkawa spy behind his clump of bushes. The intelligence that he had gained was not only of the highest importance, but was of such a nature as would force him to make an entire change in his plan of action. In all his experience as scout and spy he had heard of no movement so formidable as this threatened foray of The Comanches. Miss Major and his friends on the Texas coast were in danger, and help must be brought to them quickly, if at all. He had waited about the hacienda nearly a week, watching for an opportunity to get Colonel Aguerra into his power, but without success, and he could wait and watch no longer. That project must be abandoned, or at least postponed, and he must hasten into Texas to warn his friends of their danger. It was questionable whether he could reach them in time, but there could be no question about the necessity of making the effort.

As stealthily and quietly as a snake he crawled out from behind his bush, and made his way through the garden to the chaparral. He did not stop there, but at once pushed out toward the Rio Grande, until he reached the hut of a native Indian with whom he had left his horse. Hardly stopping to eat, he pushed on again, crossed the river, and hastened toward the Guadalupe like a man whose errand was one of life or death.

It was a long, lonely, hard and toilsome journey. Placidor pushed forward as rapidly as he dared to press his horse, never stopping to rest except when his horse needed rest, never stopping to eat except when it was necessary that his horse should have food. He cared not for fatigue; want of sleep and lack of food were nothing to him; a terrible dan-

ger threatened the friend whom he had left by the beach of Lavaca bay, and his only fear was that he might arrive too late to avoid it.

He had passed the Guadalupe, and was within a dozen miles of Linville, when he crossed a wide and well-beaten trail leading toward the south. There was no mistaking that trail. It was hardly necessary to examine it. The spy knew it to be the trail of an immense war-party of Indians, and he bowed his head in grief as he perceived that he was too late, that the Comanches were before him.

He spurred his jaded steed, and dashed madly down the trail, until smoke and flames near the coast told him that the work he feared had been done, that the village had been captured and burned.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMANCHE FORAY.

THE little town of Linville lay sweltering in an August sun. The green leaves wilted and drooped in the heated air, the birds had hid themselves, all animals that were allowed to do so had sought the shadiest retreats, the inhabitants, ensconced in such unsunned spots as they could find, were exhausting themselves in vain endeavors to get cool, and there was little to show that there was any life, afloat or ashore. The waters of the bay were wonderfully quiet, nothing stirring them but an occasional lazy swell from the gulf, that sent them to wash wearily upon the sandy beach. A brig and a few smaller craft lay motionless at their anchors, and even the light boats that were moored near the shore scarcely answered to the monotonous heave of the ground-swells.

Under a long shed at the edge of the village were a number of boys who had been playing ball until amusement ceased to amuse, and had then retreated into the shed to escape the burning rays of the sun.

As they lazily looked across the prairie, they saw a cloud of dust in the distance. Soon a dark mass came into view,

under the cloud of dust. It was a moving mass, approaching them slowly, and speculation arose as to what it was.

"I know what it is," said one of the boys. "It's a cavallada."

"And what is a cavallada?" asked another, who had lately arrived from "the States."

"A big heap of hosses, you greeney. The hosses from the stock ranches up the country git together, and go about in droves. I saw a thunderin' big cavallada yesterday."

"And I saw one the day before," said another.

"Thar's been lots of 'em about here lately," said another. "I jest wish I had as many silver dollars as I've seen hosses 'thin a week."

The tramping of the horses' feet was soon heard, and it aroused a man who had been quietly snoozing in a corner. He was a hunter and an old settler in Texas, whose slumber had not been disturbed by the chattering of the boys; but the sound of the cavallada awoke him at once, and he came forward to look at it, shading his eyes with his hand.

"What is it, boys?" he asked.

"A cavallada," answered several.

"I ain't so sure of that," said the old man.

"Why, Uncle Peter! Reckon the dust has got into your eyes. It looks just like the cavallada that was here yesterday."

"Your eyes are younger than mine, I'll admit; but you don't notice close enough. Them hosses don't seem to me to be comin' on as if they was loose. Look close, and tell me if you don't see a man lyin' down on one of them, or a foot stickin' up somewhere."

"Who could be riding them, Uncle Peter?"

"Injuns."

"The Injuns never come down to the coast."

"You have never seen 'em, but they have done it, and they mought do it again. See any thin', boys?"

The boys declared that they had looked their best, but had seen nothing suspicious, and the horses continued to come on until the outlines of their bodies were distinctly visible, and yet no riders were seen. But Uncle Peter was not satisfied.

"No loose hosses ever traveled like that," he said. "I am

willin' to bet that there's Injuns about 'em. You had better run into town, boys, and tell the folks to take to the water."

But the boys laughed at what they called the old man's crazy notions, and hinted that he had "been taking more than was good for him."

Suddenly the scene changed, and Uncle Peter's suspicions were fearfully confirmed. The concealed riders rose to their seats, and in every saddle was a plumed and painted Indian!

The boys screamed, and ran to the village to spread the alarm, mingling their outcries with the yells of the savage raiders.

"Ah, then, there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress."

As the people of Linville forcibly stated the case afterward, they were "struck all of a heap" by this unexpected invasion. It was useless to think of resistance, as they would not have been able to defend the town against the savages, even if they had had time for preparation. Their only hope was in immediate flight, and it was fortunate for them that the bay was close at hand.

Most of the men occupied themselves with getting together the women and children, hurrying them into boats, and rowing them off to the brig and the small craft that were anchored in the bay; others seized their rifles, and hastened toward the edge of the town, endeavoring to check the advance of the savages until the defenseless ones could be got out of the way.

The Comanches pressed on, confident of an easy victory, and were met by a small but resolute band of Texans. A number of detached conflicts ensued, about the scattered and deserted houses, in which were displayed valor and self-sacrifice worthy of an enduring record. Some fell on both sides, and the Comanches suffered the most, but the white men were the least able to bear the loss, and were soon pushed back to the beach, where they made a stand until all the women and children who could be got together were placed beyond the reach of the savages. Then the gallant rear-guard leaped into such boats as they could find, and made their way from the dangerous shore as well as they might, followed by a hail of bullets and a shower of arrows.

From their places of safety the fugitives listened, with hearts full of anguish, to the horrid yells of the Comanches, as they pillaged the town, and soon the flames and smoke that burst forth from the houses told of the manner in which the red fiends meant to complete their work of destruction. The stricken people sadly watched the burning of their homes, heart-sick at seeing the labor of years so suddenly swept away, but thankful that so many of them had escaped the clutches of their savage enemies.

Among the last to hear the alarm of the approach of the Comanches was Tom Labar, who was indulging in a noonday siesta in a warehouse on the bay, of which he was part owner.

When he was aroused, it was some minutes before he could comprehend the disconnected account of the frightened negro who brought him the news, and then it was by the yells of the savages that he was finally brought to an understanding of the situation of affairs.

He snatched his rifle and ammunition, and hurried out to see what could be done.

There seemed to be little room for any effectual work in the way of fighting. Flight was the order of the hour, and those who had helpless relatives were hurrying them off upon the bay. Labar, who had no relatives there, heard frequent firing at a short distance from the beach, and hurried in that direction, believing that he could serve his friends better among the fighting-men than among the fugitives.

He found a few brave men, under the lead of Uncle Peter Hanks, struggling with the Indians. These he joined, and did good service among them until it was evident that the further advance of the savages could no longer be resisted.

The thought of May Morris and her danger had been in his mind from the first; but he had believed that she was with the fugitives on the beach, and that he would best act for her safety by helping to keep back the foe until she could escape with the rest. When he perceived that any further efforts against the savages would be useless, he hastened to make sure that she was out of danger, and inquired for her among his comrades; but none of them knew any thing about her. He ran to the beach, and pursued his inquiries among the few

who had not yet got off, but found none who had seen her. In fact, a man who had been there from the first of the excitement, assured him that she had not come down to the beach—that nothing had been seen of her or her inseparable companion, Eliza Satterlee.

The conviction was forced upon Labar's mind that May and her friend had been at the school when the Comanches arrived, that they had been overlooked in the confusion, and had been unable to escape.

Staggered by this conviction, he hardly noticed that the position of affairs about him had become desperate, that the last boat load of fugitives had left the beach, that the gallant rear-guard were being driven into the water, and that his friends were calling upon him to save himself. His only thought was that he must know the fate of May Morris, and that his life would be worthless to him if she had perished.

He ran swiftly down the beach a short distance, then turned to the right, and darted into a deserted house, evading the search of the Comanches, who had seen his flight, and pursued him. Regardless of the danger behind and all around him, he worked his way from house to house, creeping under bushes and behind fences, pursuing a circuitous route to the school-house.

The school-house was a small, one-storied building, situated near the edge of the village, at such a distance from the cottage in which Eliza Satterlee and her assistant lived, that they generally brought their dinner, in preference to walking home during the hot days of summer. They were in the school-room when the Indians appeared on the outskirts of the town, awaiting the return of the children, who had scattered to their homes at noon.

Their first intimation of danger was the strange cries and shouts of some boys not far from the school house, and the two ladies suspended their conversation, wondering what those noises could mean.

"Some boy has been hurt, or perhaps has fallen into the bay," said Miss Satterlee. "I hope it is none of our children."

"It is something worse than that," said May, as a chorus of wild and dissonant yells shook the sultry air.

"Worse than that? What horrid sounds! What can it mean?"

"*Indians!*" replied May, her face white with fear, and her voice subdued by dread.

"Indians! My God! is it possible? What shall we do?"

May went to the door, with trembling steps, and saw a sight that was frightful enough to chill the blood of the bravest.

The prairie was darkened by a vast mass of men and horses, and the riders were half-naked Indians, their greasy bodies glistening in the sunlight, and their barbarian war-paint and feathers flashing gaudy colors as they careered over the plain. The sounds were no less terrible than the sights. There were the sharp cracks of hunting-rifles, and the dull reports of muskets, mingled with shouts and oaths and screams, and above all rose the shrill and piercing war-whoop of the savage, enough of itself to send a thrill of terror to the stoutest heart.

"God help us!" moaned May, as she supported her nearly fainting form in the doorway. "We must run somewhere."

"Where shall we go to?" asked Eliza, who was nearly beside herself with fear.

"I don't know. They are moving this way rapidly. If we can reach the timber, we may be able to hide there until we can think a little, and we must try to do it."

There was a little grove a few rods from the school-house, and this was the timber that May spoke of. It did not offer any thing like a secure asylum, but gave a chance of concealment. As there was no time to lose, May took her friend by the hand, and the frightened ladies essayed to fly toward the grove, endeavoring to support each other, though each was hardly able to support herself. Weak as they were, their efforts at running were only to be compared to those of a wounded bird, and they merely stumbled along, turning their eyes from the horrible sights, but unable to close their ears to the horrible sounds.

The eagle eyes of the Comanches had discovered their attempt at flight, and a renewed yelling, as well as the rapidly approaching gallop of horses, told them that they were pursued. But they struggled on until they reached the little

grove. Then, overcome by terror, they could only creep under some bushes, where, with hushed breath and beating hearts, they awaited their fate.

In a few moments the horses reached the grove, and their enemies dismounted. It did not take them long to find the hiding-place of the terrified women, and May heard her own name called, and they were addressed in Spanish.

"It is of no use. Come out here. We do not mean to hurt you," said the voice that had called her name, and they crept out, in preference to being dragged out.

CHAPTER V.

PLACIDOR AS A COMANCHE.

WHEN Placidor looked down the trail of the Comanches, and saw the flames arising from Linville and the smoke hovering over the devoted village, he knew that he was too late to prevent the catastrophe, and at once determined upon the efforts that should be made to remedy it.

He was interested, by ties of friendship and long association, in the fate of all the white people of that region, but it was in May Morris that his anxieties chiefly centered. If she had not been killed—and he did not believe that they would kill her—she must be a prisoner in the hands of the Comanches, and had probably been captured by the very man who had been employed by Colonel Aguerra to bring her to Mexico. If so, there was a chance that she might be rescued. It was at least possible that a band of brave, skillful and devoted men, by hanging tirelessly on the trail, and by taking full advantage of every opportunity, might effect her deliverance before she could be carried away to Mexico. Placidor knew that he could enlist such a band in her service, and that he would be able to guide it. It was necessary for him to learn, in the first place, whether she was really a prisoner, and whether she was to be taken by the Comanches to the mountains, or sent direct to Mexico. To this task the Tonkawa at once addressed himself.

He dismounted, and took from his "possible sack" a bag filled with pigments, which he always carried on his excursion. These he moistened with water from his canteen, and in a short time his face and body were plentifully and hideously smeared with war-paint, in the style that was fashionable among the Comanche warriors. He then rode down the trail, and mingled with the Comanches who were plundering the town, as if he was one of the party. Near a deserted house he saw a warrior lying on the ground, shot through the head by a rifle-bullet. At his belt was a fresh and gory scalp, that had lately been torn from the head of a white man. Placidor dismounted and transferred the scalp to his own belt, mounted and rode on. With that bloody trophy in his possession, although the Comanches might not recognize him, they would not fail to look upon him as one of their own warriors.

Then he rode here and there about the burning village, looking for May Morris.

When he reached Linville, the pillaging was nearly completed, and most of the houses had been given to the flames. The Comanches, finding nothing more on which they could wreak their fury, were withdrawing out of the reach of the conflagration, and making preparations for their northward march.

As the different squads came into the general rendezvous, loaded with all manner of plunder, they presented a strange and fantastic appearance, many having arrayed themselves in clothing which they had taken from the houses of the white people, and some being ridiculously attired in garments which had belonged to white women. The Tonkawa watched those squads narrowly, and soon his eyes lighted on the object of his search.

There was May Morris, with her friend Miss Satterlee, both on horseback, and carefully guarded by a number of mounted warriors.

Placidor noticed the warriors closely, and perceived that they were not all Comanches. It was as he had anticipated—she had been captured by the man who had agreed to deliver her to Colonel Aguerra. The leader of the squad was a Mexican Comanche—a Mexican who had been captured by the Comanches in youth, and who had lived among them un-

til he had become a thorough barbarian, until he was a Comanche in habits and feelings, with nothing but his yellow complexion and his remembrance of his mother's tongue to indicate that he had ever been a Mexican. With him were two others like himself, and the rest of the squad were genuine Comanches, whom he had probably selected to assist him in the work that had been cut out for him by Colonel Aguerra.

The Tonkawa did not go near the captives until they had taken their places in the line, and the band of warriors had begun to move away from the burning town. Then he rode up, as if casually, and mingled with the Comanches and Mexicans who were guarding them.

As he approached, the ladies shuddered at his hideous aspect. May could not recognize her friend, as his face was so frightfully smeared with war-paint, and the bloody scalp at his belt told her that he must be an enemy of her race ; and yet, there was something familiar in his looks, which caused her to look at him twice, in spite of the repulsiveness of his appearance.

"He asked the leader of the squad, in Spanish, whither he was taking those white women.

"To the mountains," replied the Mexican-Comanche.

"You had better take their scalps here. It would be much easier, and they would give you no more trouble."

"I would get no money for their scalps, but will be well paid for them alive."

"For both of them?"

"No ; for the young and pretty one."

"Ugh !—good !

Placidor had gained the information he wanted, and had confirmed his suspicions that this man was acting in the interest of Colonel Aguerra. He sidled up toward May Morris.

"Come away ; you frighten them," said the Mexican, observing that the captives shrunk from the sight of the hideous face and the bloody scalp.

"Ugh ! Let them learn not to be frightened so easily. They will see worse than this before they leave the Comanche country."

Then he spoke to May, in a low tone, using the English language, of which her captors understood little if any thing.

“Be quiet, Miss Mayjor. Don’t show that you know me. I am Placidor.”

May could not repress a start of surprise, when she was thus addressed in a familiar voice and by that familiar name; but her start was fortunately taken by those around her for a token of fright, and she soon regained her presence of mind. She took her cue at once, and looked at the spy with an expression of fear and wonder.

“What are you doing here, and with that horrid thing at your belt?” she asked, in the same tone that Placidor had used.

“I took it from a dead warrior, to make fools of these Injuns, who believe that I am one of them. Don’t ask questions. I want to help you if I can. Don’t wonder at any thing you see.”

He took the scalp from his belt, and shook it in her face, uttering a demoniac cry. May shrieked, covering her face with her hands, and her captor roughly ordered him to come away from her.

“What were you saying to them?” asked the Mexican, when he had withdrawn the obtrusive Indian from the captives.

“I was letting them know what they might expect. Their scalps shall yet dry in the smoke of Comanche lodges.”

“You had better leave them alone. They are my prisoners, and you must not touch them.”

Placidor sullenly submitted, and fell back.

There was nothing more that he could do at that time and place. He could not hope to rescue the ladies and take them out of the midst of that army of Comanches, and a regard for his own safety prompted him to get clear of the company into which he had so daringly ventured. He had twice been a prisoner among the Comanches, and his exploits, on several occasions, when acting against them with the white men, had caused them to know him as an enemy whose valor and skill they were bound to respect. Pinolo and several other war-chiefs were well acquainted with his person, and it was pro-

bable that some of them would recognize him before long. His disguise might protect him for a while, but the fact that he was unknown could not fail to betray him in the course of time.

Under these circumstances it became his duty to separate himself from the Comanches, and go and procure aid among the white people. There could be no difficulty in getting assistance, as the settlers would quickly be aroused, and would hasten to attack the Indians. It was certain that the Comanches must have a fight before they could get out of the white men's country, and Placidor just knew where to go to find the fighting-men.

It would not be an easy matter to separate himself from the Comanches without exciting their suspicions; but he believed that he could manage it. His first necessity was a good horse. His own had been completely fagged out by his long and exhausting ride from the Rio Grande, and he looked about to find a fresh one that would suit him.

The Comanches had a large number of horses, which had been collected during the progress of the incursion, and which were driven with the band. Occasionally a few would break away from the cavallada, and frolic for a while upon the prairie, but would generally return to the drove without giving much trouble.

One of these—evidently a splendid animal of good wind and action—had got loose when Placidor began his inspection, and was sauntering about at a little distance from the trail, calling for a companion from the cavallada. Upon this horse the Tonkawa fixed his eye, and determined to have him. After arranging the coils of his lariat, he left the line, and slowly rode toward the solitary steed.

He was met by the head-chief, Pinolo, who was galloping down the trail, after the manner of a General inspecting his troops. This was an encounter which Placidor would gladly have avoided, and he felt himself in an unpleasant position when the chief reined up his horse in front of him, and bent upon him a glance of severe scrutiny.

"Where are you going?" asked Pinolo, in the language of his people.

"To get that horse," replied the spy, and he spurred his

own horse forward, as if this explanation ought to be sufficient.

The chief looked after him, suspiciously. He knew the face of every warrior in the tribe, but did not recognize this one. He wore the paint, and there was a white man's scalp at his belt. He must be a Comanche, but Pinolo had his doubts. He inquired about him among the warriors near by, but the stranger was not known to any of them. Pinolo mentioned his suspicions to them, and several rifles were brought to bear upon Placidor, and several horses were held in readiness to start in pursuit of him upon the appearance of foul play.

The Tonkawa, in the meanwhile, went about his work coolly and unconcernedly. He rode slowly toward the stray horse, which gradually moved away from him as he advanced. This was what Placidor wanted, and his maneuvers were such as to bring about this result. The Comanches wondered at his awkwardness, not knowing that his movements were dictated by consummate skill.

He thus managed, without exciting any more suspicion, to get nearly a rifle shot from the trail before he launched his lariat. The lasso settled surely about the horse's neck, and in a few moments Placidor had him in his power, trembling and subdued. The horse was just such as he had supposed him to be, and he already felt almost safe.

Not quite. Nerve and caution were yet required, and his movements were made as leisurely as those that had preceded them. He transferred his saddle and bridle to the fresh horse, turning his own loose, and tightened the girth for real work.

Casting a glance behind, he saw Pinolo and several other warriors slowly riding toward him. As he sprung into the saddle they called to him to halt.

The Tonkawa replied by digging his spurs into the flanks of his steed, and giving utterance to a piercing yell. This combined impulse sent the half-wild horse flying like the wind toward the east.

Half a dozen Comanche bullets whistled after the fugitive, but he was already beyond their reach, and then Pinolo and

his companions, knowing that they had been duped, urged their horses to the top of their speed in pursuit.

Placidor had now no fear of being overtaken. The horse that he rode was entirely fresh, and his speed was something marvellous. The bold rider kept him at his work, and did not allow him to slacken his speed, until he had left his pursuers so far behind that they abandoned the chase. Then he rode on at an easier gait, and nightfall found him on the Arinoso. Here he washed the war-paint from his face and body, buried the white man's scalp, and prepared himself to snatch a little sleep, as he was greatly in need of rest.

CHAPTER VI.

RAIDING THE RAIDERS.

As the Comanches came down from the mountains, their trail between the Guadalupe and the Lavaca had been marked by destruction. Death had been the portion of all who were unable to escape, and blazing homesteads were the war-beacons that informed the surrounding country of the Comanche foray.

The wave of savage fury rolled southward unchecked, until it dashed against Victoria, a "right smart" town on the Guadalupe. There the inhabitants had received intelligence of the coming terror, and had made such preparations as they might to meet it. When the Comanches confidently charged up to the town, they had such a reception as staggered them, and they were soon cured of their longing for the sour grapes of Victoria. The wave recoiled for a little space, and then rolled southward again, seeking an easy and unsuspecting victim, which it found at Linville on the bay. The men of Victoria, and those who had gathered there for protection and defense, remained on guard, not knowing how soon the enemy might strike another blow.

In the mean time the settlers along the Guadalupe and the Lavaca had taken the alarm, and had hastened to arm in de-

fense of their homes. Such a formidable foray had never been known, and it would seem that extensive preparations must be made to meet it; but the gallant Texans merely seized their rifles and mounted their horses as the news reached them, assembling under their local leaders, and hurrying forward on the track of their foe. They did not stop to count their numbers or to measure the odds against them; their only thought was to meet the enemy and to punish the Comanches for their insolent raid into the heart of the white men's country.

The force that had collected from the valleys of the Guadalupe and the Lavaca numbered only sixty-five rifles; but every individual was a host, and among them were such men as Captain Caldwell, the tried and experienced leader, and Ben McCulloch, the man of iron will, irrepressible energy and immense endurance.

Arrived at Victoria, they were joyfully welcomed by the inhabitants of that lately beleaguered town, and were joined by a band that had equaled their own in numbers and in eagerness for the fray.

Only about one hundred and thirty men in all, and the force of the Comanches was variously estimated at from four to five hundred warriors; but the Texans were on their own ground, fighting for their homes and their families, and they had no fear for the result.

Without any loss of time they hastened down the broad trail that had been left by the Indians, confident of meeting them on their return from the coast, and fully intending to force them to a fight. Fugitives from below told them of the destruction of Linville, and this increased their desire to find and punish the barbarians.

Fifteen miles beyond Victoria was the Arinoso, a small stream, which was nearly dry at that season. As they drew near it, a solitary horseman was seen approaching them, and a nearer inspection showed him to be an Indian.

"Can that be one of their scouts?" asked Captain Caldwell, who rode in the advance.

"If it is, he acts very strangely," replied McCulloch. "Instead of avoiding us, he continues to come toward us, and seems to be anxious to meet us. He must be a friendly Indian."

The stranger proved to be Placidor, the Tonkawa Spy, who was well known to the leaders and to most of the men in the party. All were glad to meet him, not only because of the valuable services he could render, but because he was supposed to have the freshest news from below.

He told the story of the capture and destruction of Linville, and was able to give a much fuller account of the disaster than had yet been received, the most welcome item of his intelligence being the fact that most of the inhabitants of that unfortunate town had escaped with their lives. He was sure that the Comanches would return on the trail by which they had descended to the coast, and advised that the Texans should wait for them on the Arinoso, in preference to going forward and attacking them on the open prairie.

This advice was carefully considered, and was decided to be sound. The men were all eager to attack, and nothing could be risked by gratifying their desire at that place. If the attack should not be successful, the Texans could fall back and continue to harass the enemy, and there could be no doubt that they would soon receive reinforcements, and that the settlers along the Colorado would quickly rally to the aid of their western neighbors.

As Placidor had predicted, the Comanches followed back on their trail, and it was a formidable array that they presented as they approached the creek, their line extending a considerable distance over the prairie, and their plumes and pennons and lances glistening in the sunlight.

All possible preparations had been made for their reception. The Texans had left their horses a short distance in the rear, in charge of a few men, and had concealed themselves along the creek, where they awaited the approach of the enemy.

As the Comanches came up, their eyes noticed some suspicious circumstances, and they advanced very cautiously. Finally the main body halted, and a small party was sent forward to reconnoiter. These were fired upon as they rode their horses down to the water, and they soon retreated out of range.

The fight may be said to have then commenced; but, as the Texans mournfully remarked, it "wasn't much of a fight,"

after all. The Comanches, ignorant of the amount of the force that was opposed to them, and having their captured horses and plunder to guard, were unwilling to risk an engagement, and contented themselves with exhibitions of bravado and long range practice, which did little damage to their enemies. The Texans, aware that the Indians were largely superior to them in numbers, and knowing them to be formidable adversaries, were not so imprudent as to seek to try conclusions with them on the open prairie, and wisely confined themselves to their original purpose of harassing the enemy until they could receive sufficient reinforcements to justify them in making an attack.

Thus the Indians moved up on one side of the creek, and the white men on the other, skirmishing occasionally, and each side seeking to gain an advantage.

This state of affairs was by no means satisfactory to Placidor, who was no nearer to accomplishing the object of his mission than he had been when he was in the midst of the Comanches.

He crossed the creek, and made a reconnoissance on his own account, which resulted in the discovery that May Morris and her friend were with the main body of the Comanches, so closely guarded and surrounded that it was useless to think of attempting to reach them. When the Indians moved toward the north, however, the position of the prisoners was in the rear, and the Tonkawa believed that it would be possible, by a sudden charge with a few picked and well-mounted men, to separate them from the main body and effect their rescue.

He mentioned this idea to Captain Caldwell, and asked permission to make the attempt.

"I ought not to allow it," replied the leader. "It is too risky. We will be sure to corral these red skins after a while, and we should not throw away any lives. But we ought to do whatever we can for Bob Morris' daughter, and I believe I can trust you to be careful. How many men?"

"Six a plenty," tersely replied Placidor.

"You may take that many if you can get them, and I suppose you can; but you must come right back if you are recalled."

The Tonkawa found it easy enough to get volunteers for his enterprise ; the only difficulty was to select the men. He crossed the creek with his chosen half-dozen, and formed them in the shelter of the trees, where he explained to them his purpose and his plan. The men were to scatter, and to approach the Indians from different points, so that it should not be known at what part of the line they were aiming. When they should have sufficiently distracted the attention of the enemy, they were to concentrate, upon an agreed signal, and to charge upon the objective point.

The plan was a feasible one, although quite hazardous. Before it could be carried into effect, a messenger from Captain Caldwell recalled Placidor and his men, as the head of the Comanche column had made a sudden attack upon the Texans. Although believing that that was just the moment for his enterprise, the Tonkawa was compelled to obey, and reluctantly rejoined the main body.

The attack was repulsed, and the Comanches appeared to be encamping ; but a spy who was sent to watch their movements brought the news that they were about to continue their retreat toward the north.

Placidor then resolved to make, under cover of night, an effort for the rescue of the captive ladies.

CHAPTER VII.

FAST AND LOOSE.

TOM LABAR found it no easy matter to make his way to the Linville school-house, but reached it at last, only to discover that he was too late to render any service to its inmates.

When he entered the building, he found it empty ; but no murder had been committed there, and there were no signs of a scuffle. What had become of May Morris and Miss Satterlee ?

Standing in a sheltered position, where he believed himself

to be secure from observation, he looked across the prairie, and saw that they were captives. They had been provided with horses, and were being led away toward the north, surrounded by mounted Indians.

The terror and hopelessness of their condition struck the young man with such force, that his brain reeled and there came a mist before his eyes which shut them from his view for the moment. The disaster that he had feared had occurred; his love was in the power of the merciless savages, and there seemed to be no possibility of extricating her from their clutches. He was but one man, and what could he do? He tried to think, but the pressure at his heart overcame his reason and his will.

As he stood there, staring stupidly, and vainly endeavoring to collect his thoughts, a rifle cracked near by. He felt a quick, sharp pain at the top of his skull, as if a red hot iron had been thrust into his head, and threw up his arms and fell on the floor of the school-house.

A few moments later, two Indians stood over him as he lay there senseless, viewing with satisfaction the work which the rifle of one of them had done. The Comanche who had fired the shot drew his bright scalping-knife, felt of the keen edge, and knelt down to complete his work by stripping the scalp from his victim's head; but Labar moaned, and the scalper hesitated. The white man opened his eyes, and the savage put up his knife.

A discussion then arose between the two Comanches, as to whether the wounded man should be killed or kept as a prisoner, and it was finally decided that he was a brave, who could be made to afford a great deal of amusement to the women and children in the Comanche country, and that he should be carried away as a captive.

As the argument was held in their own language, Labar understood nothing of what was said, although his senses had returned to him sufficiently to enable him to appreciate his condition. He was conscious of a dull pain in his head, but knew that the wound was nothing like a mortal one. In fact, the bullet had struck the top of his head and glanced off from the skull, tearing the scalp and stunning him, but doing no further damage.

His captors tied his hands behind his back, took his rifle, and gave him to understand that he must get up and go with them. He did so, and was mounted on a captured horse, of which the Comanches had a great number, and soon found himself in the midst of the band of warriors, moving toward the north. He saw two female figures at a considerable distance in advance of him, but was unable to communicate with them in any way, and was too far off to be recognized by them.

As it was late in the evening when the Comanches left the burning town of Linville, they did not travel far before they halted and encamped for the night.

Tom Labar was bound more securely, and was closely guarded by his captors. He was kept at a distance from May Morris and her friend, and could find no one to answer the questions that he asked concerning them.

He had ample time to reflect upon his situation, and his reflections were by no means complimentary to himself. He had started from the beach at Linville, filled with courage and devotion, determined to use all his energies in the service of his love, but had only succeeded in throwing away his chances and falling into the power of his enemies. At the moment when he should have been in complete possession of his faculties, alert, active and vigorous, he had suffered himself to be overpowered by one feeling, and had stupidly stood still until he was knocked down and captured. He had been willing to die for May's sake, and had discovered that his death could avail her nothing. Nor could his life be of much use to her, if he should allow his wits to be so easily run away with. But it was useless to lament over an error that he could not repair, and he was bound hand and foot, with all his wits about him when he was no longer in a condition to make them available.

The next day the Comanches reached the Arinoso, where they were attacked, and their northward progress was delayed. Convinced that the settlers had been aroused, Tom Labar began to believe that there was some chance for the rescue of himself and the other prisoners; but he was so well secured and guarded, that he could only wait and hope.

When night came, there was an end of the desultory fight-

ing, and the Comanches seemed to have encamped; but their repose was only apparent or temporary, assumed for the purpose of quieting the vigilance of their adversaries, and before midnight the advance of the irregular column was again on the march.

Labar's position was toward the rear, and at a little distance from the main body. Supposing that it would be permanent until morning, he laid down, and endeavored to forget his sorrows in sleep, his two captors being stationed within a few feet of him, one keeping watch while the other slept.

There were no other Indians nearer than two rods, and Labar was between the main body and the river, in a sort of opening in the timber, where the level surface was diversified by a few scrubby bushes.

He was unable to sleep, and lay awake thinking of May Morris, and of what he could do or attempt to do if he should get loose. After watching the stars and getting no hope from them, he began to notice closely the bushes that grew about him, fancying them to be friends or enemies, capable of speech and motion.

His fancy must have been very vivid. Within a short time one of the bushes actually seemed to move. He watched it more closely, and became convinced that it was nearing him. He rubbed his eyes, wondering whether he was awake or dreaming, and looked again.

He not only saw it move, but was certain that it was at least three yards nearer to him than when he had first noticed it.

He was now fairly startled, and had half-risen upon his right arm, when a low but distant hiss caused him to drop back into his former position.

The sound came from the bush, and it was not the hiss of a serpent. It told him that he must be on the alert, that he must not again allow any emotion to run away with his wits. What could it have been but the presence of a friend that caused the bush to move, and that made itself known by a hiss? There were friends near at hand, and it might be that one of them was stealthily approaching him in this way, with the view of effecting his rescue. Resolved that he would make the best possible use of his senses this

time, he kept his eyes open and fixed upon the still moving bush.

It moved but a little further, and its movement was so slow as scarcely to be perceptible. When it stopped, there came a whisper from it, so light that it only reached his ears, and the whisper was in English, and it told him to roll over.

He yawned, as if he half-awaked from sleep, and turned over, the movement bringing him within arm's length of the bush.

Then a hand was protruded from the foliage, armed with a knife, and in a moment the thongs that bound the prisoner's hands were cut. Another movement, and his feet were also free. He did not move, but lay as if asleep, while he listened to a few words from the bush. Then he yawned again, and turned over to where he had lain before.

Almost within his reach lay the sleeping Indian. The other was seated on the ground at a little distance, with his face partly turned from the mysterious bush.

Suddenly the bush fell to the ground, and a dark, half-naked form appeared in its place, that sprung upon the waking Indian, seized him by the throat, and plunged a glittering knife into his heart.

At the same time Labar seized the sleeper at his side, drew the knife from his waist-belt, and slew him before he had fairly awoke.

The two victors quietly and quickly proceeded to strip the Comanches of their feathers and scanty garments. With these and the two rifles in their hands, they stole away under cover of the bushes to the timber that lined the bank of the river.

Labar had recognized his rescuer, but not a word was spoken until they reached the other side of the stream, and then he thanked him in a few words for his freedom.

"The Comanches have Miss Mayjor, Placidor," he said. "Can we do nothing to help her?"

"Hope so. Wait awhile, and you will see."

An ear-piercing yell came from the shore they had lately left, and in a few moments another, from another quarter.

"That's right," said the Tonkawa. "Comanches found those Injuns. Found more, too."

He went on, and soon met two of his volunteers, who had been on an expedition somewhat similar to his own, and who brought back with them the clothing and equipments of two more dead Comanches.

“Now,” said Placidor, “we go look after Miss Mayjor.”

The Comanches had been moving northward an hour or more since they left their last halting-place. The night was dark and quiet, and their march had thus far been undisturbed, the Texans having shown no disposition to make a night attack upon them.

On the left flank of their straggling line came seven horsemen, riding slowly over the prairie toward them. It was not known who or what the seven were, but it was supposed that they were stragglers, coming to join the main body, as they came on with the confidence of friends.

A nearer view showed that five of the riders were Indians, and two of them white men. The white men were evidently prisoners, and were being brought in as such by the others. Their hands were bound, or appeared to be, although their weapons had not been taken from them.

These seven horsemen struck the line of march at the point where the two white ladies were riding, and pushed in among the men who were guarding them. May Morris looked at the new-comers, and saw that one of the prisoners was Tom Labar. He answered her glance of recognition and anxiety by a look that was intended to cheer her and give her hope.

A war-chief rode up, and asked the stragglers who they were and where they had come from.

The spokesman of the seven replied that they had been scouting, and had taken two white prisoners.

“I see them,” said the chief. “That is good; but there are some strange looking Comanches here.”

As he peered into the faces of the foremost, his curiosity was suddenly ended by the blow of a tomahawk, which knocked him off his horse. Instantly the two prisoners burst the bonds at their wrists, and the seven dashed forward, shooting down those who were in their way.

“Turn to the right, May,” shouted Tom Labar; but, as ill fortune would have it, May’s horse at that moment became frightened and ungovernable, and galloped away, up the line,

into the midst of the Comanches. Miss Satterlee, not understanding these occurrences, and believing herself to be in danger, followed her friend at full speed.

The seven horsemen had cleared away all the enemies within their reach ; but they could not fight the entire body of warriors, and were obliged to spur their horses in a retreat toward the river. In this they were assisted by heavy firing further up the line, caused by a feigned attack by the Texans, which distracted the attention of the Comanches, and the seven reached and crossed the river with only one casualty, and that not a severe one.

“What success?” asked Captain McCulloch, when they met him on the other side.

“Rather poor,” replied Tom Labar. “Every thing worked well, but Miss Morris’ horse got frightened and carried her off among the Comanches, and that spoilt the job. But we knocked over about a dozen of the red rascals.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A VICTORY.

THE people of Texas were quickly and thoroughly aroused. When the news of the Comanche foray was first brought to Austin, it was not generally credited. The incursion was so sudden and on such a large scale, that the report was believed to be either untrue or greatly exaggerated. But confirmation soon arrived, and two companies of infantry were ordered to march to meet the enemy.

The people, meanwhile, were mounting and arming, and General Barleson, always foremost in times of danger, led the volunteers rapidly to Plum Creek, a small branch of the Guadalupe.

At this point Captain McCulloch had urged the people to concentrate for the purpose of striking a final blow at the Indians before they should reach the mountains, and here

were assembled the greater part of those who had been in the fight on the Arinoso.

With this body were Placidor and Tom Labar, who had seen no hope of accomplishing their special object, except in remaining with the volunteers and awaiting the chances of a fight. They knew that the Texans would concentrate and give battle to the Comanches, and they could not doubt that the result of the battle would be favorable to the white men.

The Indians might be expected to scatter after a defeat, and then there would be an opportunity to rescue the prisoners. In the meantime they had watched the Comanche column closely, as it was possible that the tools of Aguerra might attempt to secretly convey May Morris into Mexico.

Placidor and Tom Labar, scouting in the evening toward Walnut Creek, saw the volunteers from the east arrive and go into camp, and hastened to join them. They were met by Burleson, a tall and soldierly-looking man, in the prime of vigorous manhood, who greeted Labar warmly, and shook hands with Placidor as if he was an old friend.

"Scurry all right?" asked the Tonkawa, pointing to the magnificent horse on which the General was mounted.

"Scurry is hearty and happy," replied Burleson. "I have taken special care of him since you got him back from the Indians, and have never ceased to be grateful to you for your help on that occasion."

"Mighty fine horse."

"Yes; I am very proud of him, and nearly every man in Texas knows him, I think."

"Comanches know him, too."

"You are right. The Comanches have good reason to know me and my horse, and they will know more of us, I hope, before we are done with them. I owe the recovery of the horse to you, Placidor, and I shall always remember how Scurry jumped for joy when you drove your lance through that thieving Comanche."

"Want you to help *me* now, General."

"Glad to hear it. If there is any thing I can do for you, you have only to let me know what it is."

Placidor yielded the floor to Tom Labar, who told General Burleson of the capture of May Morris and Miss Satterlee at

Linville, of the ineffectual attempts that had been made to rescue them, and of the necessity of recovering them from the Comanches before they could be taken into Mexico.

"I don't know of any job you could have undertaken," said Burleson, "that would be easier than to persuade me to help you in that matter. I would do my best for Bob Morris' daughter without any asking. He was one of the readiest and best men among us, and there was no braver man at the siege of San Antonio. The only question is, what will be the best thing to do, and I shall want Placidor's opinion on that subject."

The Tonkawa explained his views. He proposed that a small body of picked men should be held in readiness, during the expected battle, to take advantage of any opportunity that might occur for the rescue of the captives. It was not likely that any thing could be effected at that time, as the Comanches would keep the ladies at the rear, carefully guarded, and out of the way of a collision; but a chance might arise, and they ought to be ready to seize it. After the battle, if the Texans should be victorious, the Comanches would scatter, as was their custom, to divert pursuit, and it would be necessary to follow them up sharply. At the same time the pursuers would be obliged to use great skill and judgment, as the Indians, if too closely pressed, would be likely to slaughter their captives.

"You have hit it off about right, Placidor," said General Burleson, "and your advice shall be followed. I will be answerable for the party, if I can get men enough to join me, and I have no doubt of that. I will be the leader, and you shall be the guide and adviser. But the fight is the first thing. Those Comanches must be whipped, whatever happens."

It was not doubted that the Comanches would be obliged to fight, as they were known to be returning on the trail by which they had gone south, and their further progress would be barred by the Texans. Nor was there any doubt of the issue of the conflict, although the infantry from Austin had not arrived, and there were only about two hundred volunteers in the two bands. But they considered themselves equal to more than double their number of Comanches, and were only anxious to meet the enemy.

The next morning the approach of the Indians was announced, Burleson's men hastened to join the main body on Plum Creek, and the whole force moved forward to the attack.

As a fight was inevitable, the Comanches did not attempt to evade it, but formed themselves in a line of battle across the trail, presenting a splendid and truly warlike array. Their order was good, and the chiefs, conspicuous by their gray plumes and head-dresses, rode up and down the line, exhorting their followers to fight bravely for the possession of the spoils they had gained. But the chiefs, as well as the warriors, were gloomy and discouraged. They had expected that a large invading army from Mexico would join them, and had congratulated themselves upon the prospect of easy victories and unlimited plunder; but this hope had been sadly disappointed. The Mexican authorities with whom they had formed a temporary alliance had solemnly promised that the army should be sent to meet them, and the Comanches had been foolish enough to put their trust in Mexican promises. The agreement had been shamelessly violated, and the hearts of the warriors were hot toward the men who had so basely deceived them. Instead of overrunning the country at their pleasure, they found themselves confronted by a small army of Texans, with whose prowess they were well acquainted, and who barred their route to the mountains.

These considerations caused them to have little heart for the fight; but they made a fine show, and stood to their work bravely as the Texans advanced in two columns, led by Burleson and Caldwell.

As the heads of the columns came within range, they dismounted and opened fire, and advanced slowly, while the Comanches slowly retreated.

The advantage was decidedly with the white men so far; but this style of fighting did not suit the Texans, who wanted a quick action at close quarters, and they gladly heard the order to wheel into line and charge.

It was in the open prairie that the battle took place, and no advantage of position accrued to either side, with the exception that a portion of the Comanches had the corner of a point of timber.

Across the prairie went Burleson, while Caldwell charged into the timber, the men firing and reloading as they rode, and cheering as if the victory was already theirs.

The Comanches, already dispirited, if not disheartened, could not stand against this fierce attack, and soon broke and fled, throwing away their plunder, and scattering in squads in the direction of the broken ground that lay between them and the mountains.

Placidor and Tom Labar were with Burleson's column during the engagement, and charged with the rest. The men who were to attempt the rescue of the captive ladies had been selected, and the position which they were to occupy in the column had been assigned them before the fighting commenced.

As the Indians formed in line of battle, it could be seen that the squad in charge of the prisoners moved into the rear of the line, which was thus interposed as a barrier between them and the Texans. As the lines fell back, they also retreated, but without getting to such a distance from the main body as would prevent them from regaining it in case of a flank attack.

When the charge was ordered, the Tonkawa and his friends were bent on piercing the battle line of the Comanches, and they succeeded in stampeding the drove of captured horses, which burst like a tornado through a portion of the line, overthrowing everything before them, and producing the greatest consternation among the Indians. But the stampede also interfered with Placidor's party, who were prevented from following up the advantage they had gained, as they were compelled to use their best exertions to keep clear of the runaway horses. When they were able to look around and note the situation of affairs, they perceived that the ladies were being rapidly carried away by their guards, and were already nearly lost to view in the timber and among the ravines in the distance.

"How is it, Placidor?" asked General Burleson, as he reined in his horse by the side of the Tonkawa. "Any chance to get at our friends?"

Placidor shook his head mournfully, and pointed at them as they disappeared in the timber more than half a mile away.

"Don't give it up so, man! This will never do at all. You surely didn't expect to get hold of them at the first dash. We must follow them up and keep them in sight. See! Labar is pushing toward them, as straight as an arrow, and we must not be behind. Do you ride after him, and I will get our party together and bring them on."

Cheered by the words of the gallant soldier, Placidor dashed on, and soon overtook Tom Labar, who had got so far ahead of the pursuing Texans, that he was liable to be killed or captured by the Comanches. The Tonkawa showed him his danger, and persuaded him to halt until Burleson could come up with the picked men.

The Comanches did not scatter as they had been expected to do, but kept together and in pretty good order as they retreated, although hotly pursued for the distance of several miles. When they reached the broken ground, they separated into squads, and took refuge in thickets and ravines. As the Texans could not follow them into those fastnesses at night, they were obliged to abandon the pursuit and encamp where they were.

CHAPTER IX.

SCOUTING ON THE TRAIL.

WHEN supper had been eaten by the wearied volunteers, and the events of the day were being discussed with the aid of sedative pipes, General Burleson had a consultation with Tom Labar and Placidor, concerning the steps that should be taken for the rescue of the fair captives.

The situation, as Burleson explained it, was not very favorable to their object. It was true that a signal victory had been gained over the Comanches; but they were no nearer to May Morris and her friend than they had been before the battle. The work of the volunteers, as an organized body, was at an end. All the plunder that the Indians had taken at Linville had been recovered, as well as most of the horses that they had collected during the foray. Thirty or forty

Comanches were known to have been killed, and only a few had been wounded on the side of the white men. If they should rest there, they could return to their homes and boast of having gained a victory which had not cost them a single life. If they should pursue the Indians further, they would be obliged to split into small parties and follow them into mountain fastnesses, where the advantage of superior weapons or skill or courage would be of little avail. Under these circumstances, the volunteers would probably be content with what they had done, and Burleson fully expected them to break camp and go home in the morning.

"I must find Miss Mayjor," said Placidor, who had become a man of one idea.

"For my part," said Labar, "I shall follow the trail, and try to rescue the prisoners, if I should have to do it alone."

"Right, both of you," said the General, "and I am with you. I will go as far in this matter as either of you will, and engage to find a sufficient number of good men who will follow me. The first thing to be done is to ascertain who will go with me, and the next thing is to learn the direction that has been taken by these Comanches who have charge of the prisoners. For this I think I must rely on you two."

Tom Labar said that he could point out the ravine in which they had disappeared when he last saw them, and it was agreed that he and Placidor should go on a scout that night, for the purpose of discovering the whereabouts of the captives, as it was supposed that they could not be far away.

The night was dark, and they were obliged to proceed with silence and great caution after they had reached the broken ground, for fear of falling into the hands of some of the straggling parties of Indians, who had secreted themselves in the timbers and hollows. In fact, they came so near to one of these parties, that they were challenged by a sentinel; but Placidor answered him in the Comanche tongue, and they were permitted to pass on.

This occurred in the ravine into which Tom Labar had seen the prisoners enter; but they and the Mexican Coman-

ches were not there, and the scouts were obliged to seek them further on.

It was near midnight when they fairly got into the hills, as Placidor judged by the moon, then near its third quarter, which was more than an hour high. That luminary gave light enough to enable them to find their way without any difficulty; but it also gave light to their enemies, and they were obliged to conceal their movements more carefully than they had previously done.

The Tonkawa could trail by moonlight as well as most trailers could in the daytime, and he finally declared that he had struck the trail of the party they were seeking. A little further on he found a small fragment of a lawn dress, that had been caught by one of the jagged branches of an ugly blackjack, and Tom Labar said that it was a bit of Miss Satterlee's dress.

Suddenly, as they were about to enter a narrow ravine Placidor caught his companion by the sleeve, and brought him to a halt.

Both sunk upon the ground, and listened intently; for the Tonkawa had heard voices ahead.

He soon was satisfied that there were Indians encamped in the ravine, and had reason to believe that they were the Mexican-Comanches and their captives. He whispered to his comrade, requesting him to remain where he was for a little while, and crept forward to reconnoiter.

When he returned, his beaming countenance expressed his satisfaction with the discoveries he had made, and he motioned to Labar to follow him. He led the young man cautiously up a steep ascent, until they reached a point from which they could look down into the glen. There were, also, some scrubby bushes growing there, behind which they could lie concealed without danger of being discovered. When Labar had concealed himself behind the bushes, the Tonkawa whispered to him to remain there while he should go below.

"Mexican-Injuns talkin'," he said. "Placidor will go listen."

The encampment was near to where the ravine seemed to come to an abrupt termination, branching off at the right

and the left in two apertures, one of which was a mere crevice, and the other just wide enough to admit the passage of a horse.

Placidor, as he crept up to within a few feet of the occupants of the glen, noted these features of the spot; but his attention was more closely fixed upon the two Mexican-Comanches, who were the leaders of the party, and who were seated on the ground, with their backs against a rock, conversing in their mongrel Spanish.

They were talking concerning the battle, but soon began to speak about their prisoners.

"We will not be molested to night," said one.

"No; we are safe enough here," replied his companion. "We are so far in advance of the others, that no one can get through and reach us."

"Unless it should be those devils who so nearly carried off our prisoners down on the Arinoso."

"I am not afraid of them here. They can not follow us into the mountains. In the morning we will go on, and will soon be beyond their reach."

"The Comanches will come together after a while, and then we will be safe, without a doubt."

"I am not so sure of that. We will be safe from the white men, but Pinolo is to be thought of. The war-chiefs are very angry with the Mexicans, and hate them worse than the Texans now. If they should know that we have captured this girl for Colonel Aguerra, they might take our prisoners from us."

"They would be welcome to one of them, I think."

"Perhaps so, but not to the other. She is worth so much money to us that we can not afford to lose her. It will be best to keep clear of Pinolo and the others as far as possible, until we can get rid of her."

"How are we to get rid of her? Shall we take her into Mexico?"

"No. Colonel Aguerra said that he would send for her, and I am expecting to see the messenger with the money before long. He was to meet us on our return. When he comes, we will turn the girl over to him, and we will have nothing more to do in the matter, unless he wants us to go with

him as a guard. We will do that, I suppose, if he will pay well."

"I hope he will come quickly. I am still afraid of those Texan devils who attacked us on the Arinoso."

Placidor had heard enough to satisfy him. He had heard the intentions of the Mexican-Comanches with regard to May Morris, and they seemed to make plain the path that he was to follow. As she was to be taken to Mexico, guarded by a small party, it would only be necessary for himself and his friends to watch until that party should start, and then way-lay it on the route.

The Tonkawa slowly crept away, with the intention of bringing Tom Labar down from his perch, and telling him what he had heard.

That young gentleman, as the moonlight crept down over the rocks, had been having, if not enjoying, a fair view of the glen and its occupants. He counted a dozen Indians asleep, besides two that were sitting up awake and conversing. But these occupied a small portion of his attention. Near the head of the glen he saw two women, one of whom he recognized as May Morris, and the other, whom he could not see so plainly, was probably Miss Satterlee. They were lying down on a couch of leaves and blankets, and it was some consolation to Labar to know that their captors showed so much consideration for their comfort.

The prisoners appeared to be sleeping when he first saw them, but May soon raised her head, sat up, and looked around. Then the thought came into Labar's mind that he would endeavor to communicate with her, to inform her that friends were near, and that she might hope to be rescued. He would also, by way of parenthesis, slip in a word to tell her how much he loved her.

It seemed that this might easily be done. He had a pencil and some paper. He would write her a note, tie it around a stone, and throw it down within her reach. The Indians would suppose it to be a fallen fragment. She alone would understand it, and would read the note at her leisure, and what joy it would give her!

Fired with this idea, he hastened to write the note, and carefully selected a stone of the proper size to bear the mes-

sage. Around this he wrapped the paper, tying it with a small strip which he tore from his handkerchief, and the missile-missive was ready.

It was necessary to throw it so that it would strike in the right place, and this part of his task required some care and skill.

In order to place himself in the best position, he stood up, leaning over the hollow a little, and holding on by one of the scrub bushes.

He carefully tossed the stone, and watched it strike at May's side, and saw her start as it struck. Then he leaned forward to see whether she would pick it up, and then the bush by which he was holding came up by the roots, and he lost his balance and fell over into the glen.

May shrieked, and the Indians jumped up and seized the unceremonious intruder.

Placidor heard the fall and the shriek as he was beginning to ascend the cliff, and quickly discovered the nature of the calamity. He could do nothing to help his captured comrade, and it was certain that the Comanches, having learned that one enemy was near them, would proceed to search for another.

The only course open to him was to retreat, and he sadly and carefully worked his way back to the camp, where he told General Burleson what had happened, and consulted with him concerning the steps that should be taken.

It was resolved to follow up the trail that he had discovered the next morning, and the party of picked men set out at an early hour, leaving the rest of the volunteers to collect the recovered horses and plunder, and return to their homes.

CHAPTER X.

JUST HIS LUCK.

MAY MORRIS and her friend, in the meantime, had not fared badly. The Mexican-Comanches, who retained a faint remembrance of civilization, and who had probably been instructed by Colonel Aguerra to treat May with consideration, were kind to her and Miss Satterlee, if not actually polite, and took care that they should be comfortable as well as secure.

They perceived that a white man was being brought along in the rear as a prisoner, and guessed that he was Tom La-bar. Their suspicions were confirmed at the first camping-place, where they saw him plainly, but were placed at such a distance from him that it was impossible to hold any sort of communication with him.

At this camp May gained an inkling of the designs of her captors, by overhearing a conversation between the two leaders. It was the mention of the name of Colonel Aguerra that first attracted her attention and caused her to listen anxiously. As the men used a mongrel Spanish dialect in speaking to each other, she could understand the most of what they said.

She learned that she had been captured through the plotting of her mother's cousin, and that the men who had taken her were to be paid for delivering her into his possession. She could not well conjecture what his object was in this proceeding; but she knew that he had already vainly endeavored to inveigle her into Mexico, and was convinced that it was for no good purpose that he wished to get her into his power.

It was some consolation to her to know that she was not to be retained by the Comanches, of whose barbarities to women she had heard so many frightful accounts. Her life and honor would be spared, whatever should happen, and there were many chances that might occur on the road to

Mexico, or even after reaching that country which she had been taught to dread.

Her own fate did not give her so much uneasiness just then, as the thought of what might happen to Miss Satterlee and Tom Labar, who had become involved in her calamities. She was determined to keep Eliza with her, if possible, and believed that she would be able to persuade the Mexican-Comanches and her avaricious relative to allow her to do so. As for Labar, there was no doubt that he was being led to a horrible death. She could think of nothing that she could do to save and assist him, and could only pray and hope.

She was relieved of the latter subject of uneasiness during the night after the attack on the Arinoso. There was a great commotion among the Comanches, and she learned that four men had been killed in the camp by unknown parties, and that the white prisoner had escaped.

This intelligence was confirmed on the night-march that was shortly begun, when a daring attempt to rescue the fair captives was made by several men disguised as Indians, and they recognized Tom Labar as one of the white men who were engaged in the attempt.

Although the behavior of her horse caused her to miss this opportunity to escape, May was greatly encouraged by the incident, as it convinced her that her friends were energetic and untiring in their efforts to effect her release. In truth, she had been quite hopeful since her meeting with Placidor, and her spirit had risen superior to her surroundings to such an extent that it compelled the admiration of Eliza Satterlee. The elder lady did homage to the courage and strength of mind of the younger, and unconsciously came under the sway of her late assistant, adopting her opinions and following her lead in all things. She had galloped after May's frightened horse at the time of the rescue, simply because she supposed that her friend was doing the very thing that ought to be done, and that it was necessary that she should follow her.

But May's high spirits had a fall after the Plum Creek battle. She was at such a distance in the rear that she could form no accurate idea of what was going on, and only knew at last that the Indians were defeated, because she saw them retreating, and because she was hurried away by her captors

toward the thickets and defiles at a distance from the battle-field.

Her feeling of disappointment increased until she was quite dispirited, when the party encamped for the night in a damp and dismal glen, the sight of which was of itself sufficient to drive hope from her heart. A great victory might have been gained by her friends, but she feared that it would be of no benefit to her. She had wit enough to know that it would be difficult for the most skillful to find the Comanches when they should reach their retreats among the hills, or for the bravest to overcome them in their own strongholds.

With Eliza Satterlee she talked in whispers of these matters, as they lay on the couch that had been spread for them in the glen, until fatigue overpowered them both, and they gradually fell asleep.

May awoke after a while, and sat up on her couch. The moon had risen, and the mild rays stealing down into the glen, were flooding it with light. As she looked around, she saw something move on the side of one of the cliffs that shut in the deep recess, and thought that she could make out the figure of a man. She was still gazing at this, when something whizzed through the air, and fell on the ground at her side.

She started, but glanced involuntarily at the fallen object, and saw something that looked like a ball of paper.

Yes, it was a ball of paper, though it had fallen pretty heavily, and it was tied with a bit of rag. It was a strange thing to be found there in the wilderness, and the thought at once flashed through May's mind that it might be a message from some concealed friend.

She picked it up, but had hardly begun to examine it when there was a tearing, breaking noise, followed by a heavy fall, as a man came crashing down into the glen from the cliff.

May shrieked in affright, and the sleeping Indians suddenly awoke and started to their feet.

The man who had occasioned this excitement did not seem to have been hurt by the fall. He had been dropped into a clump of bushes, from which he hastened to extricate himself; but the Comanches were upon him, and in spite of his struggles, he was seized and bound.

May had risen to her feet, for she had recognized Tom Labar, and was ready to fly to his assistance if he should be threatened with harm. She had picked up a sharp knife, which had been dropped by one of the Comanches, and kept it concealed upon her person. She did not know what she meant to do with it; but was sure that she would use it to some purpose in the event of an emergency.

The present occasion did not call for any display of valor on her part, as the Indians did not seem disposed to hurt the white man just then, but bound him securely and seated him on the ground, while a portion of them went down the glen, and others scaled the cliff, to ascertain whether the intruder had had a companion, and to catch him if possible.

They returned after a while, having gained nothing by their search but the knowledge that Labar had not been alone, as they had found the trail of two men coming into the glen, and of one leaving it.

On the return of the searchers, they held a consultation concerning the prisoner who had been so strangely captured. As they used the Comanche language, May could not understand what they were saying, but judged that a part of them wished to save Labar alive for some purpose which she could not comprehend; while the others, including the Mexican Comanches, were for putting him to death on the spot.

The opinion of the latter appeared to prevail; for the men fell back, and their leader, raising his rifle, was about to level it at the captive, when May Morris rushed forward, and ordered him, in a loud voice, to hold.

The man dropped his rifle, and stared at her in astonishment. In her right hand she held a gleaming knife, and the point was turned toward her breast.

Labar had gazed calmly at his would-be executioner, his cheeks pale, but with no sign of fear on his fine countenance; but his face flushed now, as he turned and looked at the girl who had caused this unexpected interruption.

"Do you see me?" she exclaimed, addressing the Mexican-Comanche in Spanish. "I know why you have taken me and brought me here, for I have heard you speak of it to your companion. You are to be paid a large sum by Colonel Aguerra, of Mexico, for delivering me to him; but you will

never get a dollar of it if you harm that man. If you kill him, I will drive this knife into my heart, and you may be sure that Colonel Aguerra will give you nothing for a corpse."

Tom Labar and Miss Satterlee, who knew little if any Spanish, were unable to understand this speech, although May's motive was apparent, and they could only gaze at her in astonishment, uncertain what they ought to do or say.

The Mexican understood her plainly enough, and her words produced a decided impression upon him. He did not need to be told that Colonel Aguerra would pay him nothing for a corpse, and he had no intention of doing any deed that would destroy his prospect of reward. The only question in his mind was, whether the young lady was really in earnest--whether she would make her words good and kill herself in case he should kill the prisoner before him.

A glance at her told that she was in earnest. Her lips were compressed by a stern determination, and her eyes shone with the light of a strong resolve.

"You need not doubt," she said. "You may be sure that I will do as I say. That man must live, or I will die."

"I do not believe that you would do it," replied the Mexican. "Young women do not kill themselves so easily as that, even for their lovers. But some of the warriors wish to keep him, and I am willing that he should live."

May could guess why some of the warriors wished to keep the prisoner, and for what sort of a fate they desired to reserve him, and the malicious look of the Mexican-Comanche told her that Labar's respite would be only a temporary one. This state of affairs did not satisfy her. She had succeeded so well thus far, that she determined to press her advantage and increase her demands.

"That is not enough," she said. "You must set him free and send him back to his own people. I know that you mean to kill him when you get a chance, but I say that he shall not die. I do not care for my life if I must be carried to Mexico, and it will be worth nothing at all to me if he is dead. You must set him free and let him go back to his people, or I will strike this knife into my heart."

The Mexican looked at her angrily, as if he thought that she was pressing the point rather too far; but her look was

as determined as ever, and it was evident that she intended to insist upon compliance with her demands.

Just then a thought arose in his own mind. He had conceived a plan by which he believed he could satisfy her, please himself, and save trouble. After a consultation with the others, he told her that Labar might go.

"We do not wish to kill the man," he said; "but he must not trouble us any more. If he will promise to go back to his own people we will set him free."

The young man hesitated, but May begged him to comply with this condition, and he gave the required promise. He was unbound, and was about to go down the ravine as he had come, when he was recalled.

"Tell him," said the Mexican to May, "that he must not go in that direction, that I will show him the way."

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Because another came with him, and we do not wish them to meet until we can get away from this place. He will be as safe if he goes by another route."

This seemed reasonable to May, although she was not entirely satisfied with the change of course, and she repeated to Labar what had been said. As he could do no better, he acquiesced in the decision of his captors, and followed the man who was to show him the way.

The Mexican led him into the narrow passage at the right, at the head of the glen, and gave him to understand, when he had fairly entered it, that he must go in advance of his guide. This was a suspicious circumstance to Labar, and caused him to suspect what was the real object of his captor in taking that course. The passage was quite dark, and the sides were so high that the rays of the moon could not penetrate it, and nothing could be easier than for the man in the rear to assassinate the man in the advance.

Tom Labar thought of this, and he now believed that it was the intention of the Mexican to inveigle him away from the captive ladies and kill him. But there was no help for it, and he walked on through the dark passage, thinking that it was "just his luck," and at the same time blaming himself for the carelessness that had brought him into another scrape.

The narrow way was quite tortuous, and after a while he

passed a turn that hid him for a few moments from the other.

Then the Mexican raised his rifle, and stepped forward stealthily; but when he reached the point of rock where he had last seen Labar, that young gentleman was no longer visible.

Supposing that he had gone forward a little further, the Mexican walked on very cautiously, but started back in affright when he found himself at the edge of a chasm, and apparently unfathomable.

The would-be assassin looked down into it, but could see nothing. He bent down and listened, but could hear nothing. He looked all round, but his prisoner was not in advance of him, and it was manifestly impossible for any one to escape from the passage by one side or the other. There could be no doubt that Labar, while walking blindly in the darkness, had fallen into the chasm, and that his fall had been so unexpected that he had not even been able to cry out.

"It's best as it is," muttered the Mexican. "I did not kill him, and there was no noise. It is very good."

When the man returned to the glen, May asked him what had become of the white man.

"He's gone," he replied.

"You have killed him," said May, whose suspicions had been excited when she saw the Mexican take his rifle.

"I swear to you that I have not killed him; I told him to go, and he went."

May tried to believe this, but there was a chilling dread at her heart, and she sat down by Eliza Satterlee, weeping as one who could not be consoled.

She was not allowed to rest, as her captors soon left the glen and pushed on into the mountains. Before they had gone far, they seized her unawares, and took from her the knife which had played such an important part in the little drama of the night.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PARTY FROM MEXICO.

OVER the broad and shelterless prairie, where the grass and flowers were withering and drying up in the burning heat of the August sun, Ramon Aguerra was slowly journeying toward the north.

With him were Manuel, the major-domo, or steward of his father's estates, three servants, and a half-blood Mexican-Comanche, who acted as guide.

The journey was a hard, hot and toilsome one, particularly discomfoting to such a gilded youth as Ramon Aguerra, who had been brought up in luxury and indolence, and was unaccustomed to any kind of hardship or exposure. But his errand was one that would well repay him for a little labor and self sacrifice. He was going to bring home a wife, a woman whose beauty had been highly extolled by a person who was well qualified to judge, and whose union with him would make him beyond doubt a rich man. She might be a little unwilling at first, but Ramon flattered himself that she could not long resist his charms, and that his future was bright and secure.

His fair prospects did not prevent him from being seriously discommoded by the hot and tedious journey, and he was unmanly enough to complain of the fatigue and the other annoyances.

"What would you have, senor?" replied Manuel, who was a staid and reliable middle-aged servitor. "All things can not be as we would wish them to be in this world, and we can have no great gains without some labor and trouble. It is true that it is hot and that we are tired, but our journey is near its end, and we will soon be in the shade of the trees. Think of the beautiful wife who awaits you, yonder in the mountains, and forget the hardships of this long ride."

"I hope we will find her there. We surely ought to, after having endured so much for her. Do you think the Indians will bring her, Manuel?"

“I can hardly doubt it, *senor*. Mispo says that he is quite sure of it. There were so many of them, that they could do as they pleased in Texas.”

Mispo, who was the half blood guide, was brought forward to confirm this statement, and he repeated the opinion that he had frequently given to the son of Colonel Aguerra. He knew that Pinolo and the Comanches had gone down to the coast, and their force was so large that there was nothing to hinder them from sweeping the country. He had every reason to believe that the men with whom Colonel Aguerra had bargained had found the *senorita* and brought her to the mountains.

“There is one thing that troubles me,” said Ramon, when he was again conversing confidentially with Manuel. “Our people promised to send an army to join the Comanches in Texas, but did nothing of the kind. They may be angry with the Mexicans for that breach of faith, and it may not be safe for us to go into their country.”

“That is nothing, *senor*. Nobody pretends to keep faith with the barbarians, and I suppose they do not expect it. If they should be angry, your father has told you what to tell them. It is surely a sufficient excuse to say that an insurrection occurred, and that we could not spare any soldiers. Besides, we have the peace-pipe that Pinolo gave to Colonel Aguerra, and that is a safeguard. Mispo assures me that it amounts to a promise of protection; and that those poor fools of Comanches never break their word.”

“I hope there will be no trouble, but can not help feeling uneasy.”

“Give yourself no thought about it, *senor*. We have nearly reached the mountains, we will soon be resting in the shade, and I think I see a smoke rising above the trees yonder.”

Mispo had noticed the smoke, and he rode forward to see what it meant.

He soon returned with the intelligence that a small party of Comanches were encamped in the timber, and the news which they gave him was important. A large force of Comanche warriors had invaded Texas, and had had a fight. They were then in the mountains, and there were with them two white women, whom they had brought back as prisoners.

Ramon Aguerra and his party joined the Comanches, but learned few particulars in addition to those which the half-blood had gained. As the town of Linville had been plundered and destroyed, they were convinced that one of the prisoners must be May Morris, and nothing remained for them to do but to go and receive her.

Having learned where Pinolo and the main body of the warriors were to be found, they rested at the foot of the hills until morning, when they made an early start, hoping to complete their journey.

It was not until the middle of the afternoon that they reached their destination, which proved to be a wild and romantic spot in the heart of the mountains. Here were tall cliffs, rugged and broken masses of rock, deep gorges, precipitous ascents and impassable ravines, jumbled together as if thrown out from the bosom of the earth by some mighty convulsion, and mingled with green and secluded valleys, where nature seemed to have fallen asleep when resting from the labor of piling up this rocky chaos.

In one of the pleasant valleys, which was none the less a valley because it was so near the mountain-top, they found Pinolo and a large body of Comanches, who were then fairly out of the reach of the vengeful Texans. Indeed, they knew that the pursuit had not been continued after the day of the battle, and that they had been safe since their scattered parties united in the hills.

The strangers were stopped at the edge of the valley; but the peace pipe of Pinolo and Mispo's explanations easily procured them admittance to the Comanche encampment.

They could not help noticing that the chief received them coldly, and that the dark looks which the warriors bent upon them were by no means indicative of friendly feelings; but these appearances might be owing to the stolid and undemonstrative nature of the Indian character.

Ramon Aguerra explained to Pinolo the business that had brought him there, and the chief, who spoke Spanish well, listened to him in silence.

"My father told me to say to the Comanches," continued the American, "on behalf of the authorities of Nueva Leon, that they were very sorry that they were unable to send an

army to join you, as they had agreed to do. There was a serious insurrection at the West, and so many soldiers were required to put it down, that none could be spared at that time for the invasion of Texas."

Pinolo made no reply to this part of the speech, and the state of his feelings could not be inferred from any expression of his countenance.

"The white woman is here," he said. "There are two white women. I have nothing to do with them. If the warriors who brought them here will give them to you, they have a right to do so."

This was highly satisfactory, and Remon perceived that it was only necessary to find the men with whom his father had bargained, and to take possession of his fair Texan relative.

He soon found them, and stood in the presence of May Morris. As he looked at her he felt that the eulogies of Colonel Aguerra's emissary had not been exaggerated, for he was sure that he never beheld a more beautiful woman. Although she was sad and dispirited, with traces of tears on her face, and the disorder of rude travel in her attire, and although there was no pleasant light in her eyes, when she saw before her a man whom she regarded as her natural and hereditary enemy, her beauty was such as could not fail to entrance his senses and fill him with the desire to possess her.

"It gives me great joy to meet you, my fair cousin," he said, when he had introduced himself to her. "It is a long time that we have sought you and endeavored to persuade you to come and take possession of your property and the hearts of your relatives."

"Is it a proper and gentlemanly way that you have taken of forcing me to comply with your demands?" replied May. "Can you and your father justify yourselves in causing me to be torn from my home by savages, and in carrying me away from my own country against my will?"

"It is all for your good. A young lady who is unable to see her interests must have them forcibly presented to her.

"You are greatly mistaken if you suppose that I can ever respect your father or yourself, when you have treated me so abominably."

"There was no other way; you were so obstinate; and we feared that you might contract a marriage with some miserable Texan, which would be a wrong thing for a daughter of the house of Aguerre to do."

"I have nothing to do with the house of Aguerre, and want nothing to do with it. Give me the papers that were stolen from my father, and you may have the rest."

"It is not enough, my fair cousin. We must have *you*."

"I will not go with you unless you compel me to, and will not remain with you unless you keep me a prisoner. I warn you that I will escape from you as soon as I have an opportunity, and I am sure that an opportunity will come to me."

"I shall hope that we will be able to present such considerations, when we get you with us, as will induce you to remain."

Ramon had wit enough to perceive that the young lady was in no humor to be wooed, and that he had better say nothing of his own claims and expectations. Expressing the hope that they would soon become better acquainted, he left her to her meditations, and went to settle up his business with the Mexican-Comanches who had captured her.

When he paid the leader of the party the money that had been agreed upon, that individual informed him concerning the Texans who had been on his track since he left the coast, and who had, on at least two occasions, attempted the rescue of the fair captives. He had not seen them since the last attempt, but believed that they were still on the trail, and that they would be likely to make trouble for the Mexican party when they should leave the hills.

Young Aguerre was so disgusted with this intelligence, that he engaged the man to accompany him, with a Comanche guard, as far as the Rio Grande, promising to pay them well for their services. He laid down to rest that night, secure in the belief that nothing could interfere to prevent the consummation of his father's plans and his own hopes.

His unfortunate relative saw no reason why she should not be of the same opinion, but the knowledge was far from bringing her any comfort. She feared that Tom Labar was dead, she had not seen or heard any thing more of Placidor,

and it seemed to her that she was deserted by her friends, abandoned by Providence, and hopelessly in the power of her enemies. Two points she had fully determined in her own mind—that she would never submit to the designs of her Mexican relatives, whatever they might be, and that she would persuade Ramon Aguerra to allow Eliza Satterlee to accompany her to New Leon.

She at last fell asleep as she was discussing these points with her fellow-captive.

CHAPTER XII.

COMANCHE VENGEANCE.

RAMON AGUERRA, as well as all others in the valley, slept in the open air. His blanket-companion was Manuel, the major-domo, and near him were the other members of his party.

When he rose in the morning, he washed himself at a spring that gushed out of the rock, and took all possible pains with his toilet, as he was desirous of making a good appearance before May Morris.

While he was thus engaged, he discovered that he had lost something, and that loss troubled him so much that he hastened to ask the major-domo about it.

“Did I give you that peace-pipe last night, Manuel?” he asked.

“No, senor. I have not seen it since you showed it to the Comanche chief.”

“And I am quite sure that I had it when I laid down last night. I am afraid that it has been stolen from me.”

“That can not be, senor. Why would any one steal it? You have dropped it somewhere about the encampment, and we will look for it, though its loss appears to me to be a matter of small consequence.”

They had not yet begun their search, when there came a messenger from Pinolo, who informed Ramon that the chief

wished to see him. Accompanied by Manuel, he followed the messenger, and found the Comanche on the top of a lofty cliff, one side of which reached down precipitously to a distance of full three hundred feet. Pinolo was surrounded by warriors, who opened their ranks to receive the Mexican. When Ramon had entered the circle, he was seized, and his hands were bound behind his back.

Alarmed by this proceeding, and by the hostile glances that were directed at him on all sides, he stammered out a protest against being treated as a prisoner, and asked the meaning of such strange conduct.

"Mexicans," replied the chief, "your people have lied to the Comanches. They promised to send an army into Texas to join us, when they knew that they would not keep their promise. The Comanches went to the coast, and waited for the Mexican liars, but they came not. The Texans attacked us, and took away all our horses and plunder, and killed many brave warriors. The Mexicans who lied to us caused the death of those warriors."

The Comanches indicated their satisfaction with this address by a grunt of assent, and to Ramon Aguerra the situation began to look decidedly terrifying.

"I have already told you," he said, "that we could not spare any soldiers—that they were all needed to put down an insurrection at the west."

"That was a lie. Whenever a man tells a lie, he must tell another to hide it. The white people are all liars, and the Mexicans are the worst of all the white people. The Mexican liars have caused the death of our warriors, and our women and children call for vengeance upon them. You are the son of one of the worst of the Mexican liars, and have been sent here to tell us more lies. The Comanches say that you must die."

Die! Aguerra shuddered and turned pale at the word. Was this to be the winding up of the expedition—the end of his high hopes and bright dreams? Was death to be the bride that he had come into the mountains to seek? He looked around, but saw no help anywhere, no hope of escape. He could only plead with his accusers, who were also his judges.

"I brought hither the peace-pipe that you gave my father," he said. "It was agreed that any one who should carry that might come to you and return in safety."

"Where is it?" sternly replied the chief.

"I do not know. I had it last night, and this morning it was gone. Perhaps it was stolen from me while I slept."

"The Mexicans have crooked tongues, and it may be that the Comanches have crooked fingers," said Pinolo, with a grim smile.

"I showed it to you, and these warriors saw it. You can not kill me when you know that I brought the peace-pipe."

"Where is it?" again demanded the Comanche, as he made a sign with his right hand.

Two stalwart warriors rushed upon the trembling Mexican. Manuel, frightened as he was, tried to go to the assistance of his master's son, but was seized and held firmly. The warriors lifted their victim by his shoulders and knees, and his shrieks of fear and appeals for mercy were pitiful, as he caught a glimpse of the fate before him.

There was no mercy in the hearts of the Comanches, and they wished no sweeter music than his cries of agony. The two warriors balanced him with his head toward the edge of the cliff. Beyond was distance, broken only by a fleecy cloud far away, and a floating vulture nearer at hand. Below, far below, were giant trees and rugged rocks, looking hungrily up at the cliffs, like a monster waiting for his meal.

Twice the stout warriors swung the condemned man toward the verge of the cliff, and at the third swing they shot him forward, still struggling and shrieking, into space.

There was no more noise. The tragedy was ended.

"What shall be done with the others?" asked a warrior.

"We will not kill them now," replied Pinolo. "Perhaps we will let them go back and tell their people how the Comanches treat Mexican liars."

Manuel was released. Nearly frightened out of his wits, he went to tell his companions what had happened.

The fair captives soon learned of the fate that had befallen the young Mexican. May first overheard her captors speaking of it, and Manuel afterward told her the story, with all its dreadful particulars.

She was stunned by this intelligence, and did not know what to think; as for doing any thing, that was out of the question. It was evident that the death of Ramon Aguerra would effect a change in her destiny, and what would be the nature of that change? Would the Comanches hold her and her friend? That would be far more terrible than her forced visit to Mexico. She knew that their "tender mercies were cruel," and that the horrors of her situation, if she should remain in their power, would be worse than any thing that could happen to her among her Mexican relatives. What would become of the remainder of the Mexican party, and what would be done with her and her friend, Miss Satterlee?

These questions were answered for her, after a while, by her captors.

The Mexican-Comanches perceived that the death of Ramon Aguerra gave them an opportunity to gain a further reward, and they hastened to make a proposition to Manuel, who gladly accepted their offer. He authorized them to employ a sufficient number of Comanches to act as an escort for himself and the young lady, promising that they should be amply rewarded on their arrival in Mexican territory.

May was well satisfied when she was informed of this determination, as a choice between two evils was better than no choice, and she was anxious to get out of the hands of the Comanches, even if she must fall into the power of Colonel Aguerra. She tried her persuasive powers upon the major-domo, and succeeded in inducing him to consent that Eliza Satterlee should be one of the party.

It was not at all certain that this arrangement could be carried into effect, and those who had planned the enterprise had serious doubts concerning its feasibility. The Comanches might be unwilling to let Manuel and his companions go, and they might wish to detain the white women. Both these contingencies were very likely to happen, and the Mexican-Comanches deemed it proper to exercise a great deal of caution in their movements.

Their plans were so well laid and carried out, that they secretly left the encampment at night, with Manuel and the two ladies, accompanied by Mispo and half a dozen Comanche warriors. It is not improbable that Pinolo and the other

war-chiefs knew of their departure and suspected their purposes, but were unwilling to provoke a conflict or create any dissension by compelling them to remain. It is certain that no pursuit was attempted.

The seceding party, however, believed that they might be pursued, and governed their movements by that belief. When they had reached the foot of the mountain, they stopped to rest in a ravine, where they considered themselves secure from observation. At the head of the ravine was a narrow passage, through which they entered it, and this they guarded, for the purpose of preventing an attack on that side, not fearing danger from any other quarter.

It was near morning when they halted in the ravine, and the sky was streaked with the tints of dawn when they had completed the preparations for their march across the prairie. There had been no sign of pursuit by the Comanches in the mountains, and all was quiet on that side.

The guards had been withdrawn from the passage at the head of the ravine, the horses were all in readiness, and Manuel had stepped to where the fair captives were seated, to request them to mount, when there was an occurrence which had not been put down in the programme of the party, and which disturbed their calculations to a considerable extent.

The ravine gradually spread out as it approached the prairie, and trees and bushes took the place of rock and gravel, forming a good cover for an attacking party, if any should approach from that direction.

From this cover came a hail in Spanish, but with an unmistakable Texan accent, ordering the party to halt and surrender, and the early beams of the sun shone upon a formidable array of rifle-barrels that peeped out from the foliage.

The Comanches hastened to take cover behind the rocks, and a parley ensued. The Texans offered to spare their lives if they would give up the white prisoners; but they were afraid that the promise would not be kept, and believed that they could save both their lives and their prisoners by getting out at the head of the ravine, and setting their opponents at defiance. So they continued to talk, gradually edging toward the passage at the rear.

May Morris and Eliza Satterlee were standing opposite the

passage, wondering how these strange negotiations would terminate. They had already heard the Comanches declare that they would kill their prisoners rather than give them up, and had good reason to believe that they would keep their word if they should be driven to extremity. Was there nothing that they could do, to aid their friends and to help themselves?

Eliza Satterlee, looking through the passage, saw a white man standing beyond it, and eagerly pointed him out to her friend.

"There is Tom Labar, May. We can escape to him if we act quickly. Run as fast as you can, May, and don't stop to look behind you."

"But you, Eliza—what will you do?"

"I will follow you. I will be right on your heels."

"Come on, then."

And May started toward the head of the ravine, followed by her friend.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RESCUE.

GENERAL BURLESON and Placidor, with their picked party of volunteers, had no difficulty in following the trail which the Tonkawa had found during the night. The Comanches had continued their retreat into the mountains, and had gone forward so rapidly that no straggling parties were overtaken, and there was nothing to prevent the volunteers from proceeding on the trail in which they were specially interested.

When they reached the glen in which Placidor had found the young ladies and their captors encamped, it was empty, and they halted for the purpose of examining it and determining in what direction the Comanches had gone.

Placidor pointed out the ledge from which Tom Labar had fallen, and shook his head mournfully as he spoke of that sad accident.

"They have killed the poor fellow, I suppose," said Burleson. "They would not be likely to let him live, after he had made two attempts to rescue the girls. The occurrence frightened them, too, and probably caused them to break camp and go right on into the mountains. So, you see, we have nothing to do but to find out the direction they took."

This was the general opinion; but Placidor, in examining the place, found tracks leading into an opening at the head of a glen, and among them he recognized those of Tom Labar, who had worn boots.

With Burleson he followed the tracks into the opening and through a narrow cleft in the rock, until their further progress was stopped by a chasm that yawned at their feet.

"I understand it now," said Burleson. "They have had some little consideration for the ladies, and have brought Labar out here to make an end of him. They have killed him and tumbled him into that hole, and that is the last of one fine young man."

A shout from below told the General that he was mistaken in his supposition this time.

"What's that?" he asked eagerly. "Can it be that Tom Labar is down there, and alive?"

"That's what it is," replied the voice of Labar himself. "I am alive and hearty, as you will soon know if you will send me down a rope."

A lariat was lowered, and the young man was soon brought up to the surface, where he explained how that chasm had happened to prove the means of his salvation.

While he was being driven forward by his captors, expecting momentarily the shot that would put an end to his career, he had suddenly missed his footing, and had fallen into the hole that was apparently fathomless. It proved to be only thirty feet deep, and at the bottom was a bed of soft sand upon which he had fallen, receiving only some slight bruises and a pretty severe shock. He remained silent, as he soon discovered that the Comanches supposed him to have been killed, and waited until the party had left the glen before making any efforts to extricate himself.

His efforts were unsuccessful, as it was impossible to climb the steep sides of the chasm, and he could do nothing but summon up his patience and wait for deliverance. On this point he had no uneasiness, as he felt sure that Placidor would bring his friends to search for him, and that they would eventually find him.

A further examination of the glen disclosed the route which the Comanches had taken, and the volunteers again started, "hot foot," on the trail.

The course which they were to pursue was soon settled upon, and was decided by the conversation which Placidor had overheard between the Mexican-Comanches. They would simply keep in the vicinity of the Indians, unless in case of some unexpected contingency, until Colonel Aguerre's messenger should arrive from Mexico, and May Morris should be delivered into his possession. Then they would waylay the party that should attempt to take her to Mexico, and that would be an end of the matter.

After another nightly camp they knew, from indications in which they could not easily be deceived, that they were near the end of their journey, as the Indians had made at least a temporary halt. It was then decided that they should find a secure hiding-place, where they would rest quietly while some of the best scouts should observe the movements of the Comanches and watch for the separation of May Morris and her captors from the main body. A suitable place for an encampment was found at the foot of the mountain, and Placidor and Tom Labar went up to reconnoiter, but not until the Tonkawa had carefully admonished his friend concerning what he should do, and had obtained his promise to refrain from all sorts of indiscretions.

It was night when the scouts reached the Comanche encampment, but not very dark, and Placidor, after he had gone on alone to make a few notes of the situation, led Tom Labar to a position from which they could have a good view of the ladies and their captors, while nothing but the grossest carelessness could cause their own discovery.

May was there, awake and sitting up with her friend, and Tom was strongly tempted to show himself to her, to assure her that he was alive and still striving to assist her. But he

overcame this temptation, and contented himself with carefully observing her surroundings.

He saw there a middle-aged Mexican, of respectable appearance, and came to the conclusion that he was the messenger who had been sent by Colonel Aguerra. This conclusion was borne out by the fact that he was accompanied by a few Mexican servants, and by his consultations with the men who had captured the ladies. If he was really Aguerra's messenger, it was probable that he would soon return to his own country with his prize, and then would come the time for action.

These suppositions were proven true much sooner than the scouts had expected, as it was not yet midnight when the Mexicans and the ladies, accompanied by a number of Comanches, left the camp and went down the mountain.

Placidor was surprised that they should go at such an hour and with such secrecy; but his ingenuity did not enable him to guess the reason, and he silently followed the trail with Tom Labar.

They kept so close on the heels of the Comanches, that they were almost within the ravine when the latter came to a halt; but they quickly backed out, and concealed themselves where they could watch the temporary camp and observe the preparations for resuming the journey. As Tom Labar noticed how carefully the rear entrance to the ravine was guarded, a thought came into his mind, and he whispered it to his companion.

"I see how it is now, Placidor. They have had some sort of trouble with the Comanches up yonder, and have run away."

"Good," replied the Tonkawa, in compliment to Tom's intelligence.

"They are afraid of being attacked, and if a crowd of Comanches should come down the trail after them, we would be in a fix."

"Good."

"Bad, I should say. But, unless I am greatly mistaken, the camp of our friends is just beyond them. They won't be apt to stay long where they are, and when they start out on the prairie, they will run into a trap."

"Good."

"So we can do nothing but stay where we are and keep quiet until they move, unless those other Comanches should come down on us."

Placidor was of the opinion that his friend had stated the case correctly, and that they had nothing to do but wait. So they waited until dawn, when they plainly heard Burleson's voice in front, summoning the savages to surrender.

"What are they saying, Placidor?" asked Labar, who was unable to understand the parley that ensued.

"Nothing good. Those Comanches talk and hide. Want to get time to run away."

"They know that they are in a trap, and they will want to sneak out in this direction. I see the girls, and I mean to let them know that we are here."

Labar arose from his place of concealment, and in a few moments May started to run toward him, followed by Eliza Satterlee.

This movement disconcerted the Comanches, and caused them to make a sudden change in their tactics. Looking back, they saw that there were enemies in their rear, and then they knew that their fate was sealed, that they were in a trap from which they could not escape.

Believing that the lives of none of them would be spared by the Texans, their first thought was that they would take the only revenge that was left them, that they would carry out their threats of killing the captives.

They rose to their feet, sent a flight of arrows after the girls, and then rushed forward with their tomahawks and knives. This action exposed them to the volunteers, who were afraid to fire lest they should hit some whom they did not wish to hit, and who hastened from their concealment to pursue the pursuers.

May Morris was struck in the left arm by an arrow, but got into the passage at the head of the ravine without receiving any further damage. Eliza was also struck, and the Comanches were close upon her when she reached the passage; but, to the surprise of all, she turned in the narrow way, and faced her pursuers defiantly, blocking up the pass so that they could not get at her friend without removing her.

These events transpired so suddenly and with such rapid-

ity, that Tom Labar had gone forward but a few steps to meet May, when she came out of the ravine, and he received her in his arms. Placidor had leveled his rifle, and a bullet from that unerring tube sped through the skull of a Comanche who had raised his tomahawk to strike down Eliza Satterlee. But she had already been mortally wounded by arrows, and sunk by the side of her savage foe. The volunteers were already upon the Comanches, who fought desperately against overwhelming odds, and in a few moments there was not one of them left alive. The Mexicans had crawled into all sorts of possible and impossible places of concealment, from which they were dragged out, begging in Spanish and in broken English that their lives might be spared.

Only one shot had been fired during this encounter, and that was not sufficient to bring the Comanches down from the mountains, even if they should have chanced to hear it. The victors, therefore, had nothing to distract their attention from the task of taking care of their wounded, and securing their prisoners.

May Morris, who had not been seriously hurt, hastened to the side of her dying friend as soon as her wound was bound up, and burst into tears when she perceived that death was so close at hand.

"I told you, my darling," whispered Eliza, "that I was one woman who would gladly die for you."

"Would to God that you had never had the chance!"

"Don't say that, May. I am so happy that I have been of some use. Kiss me good-night, dear."

May bent down, and received the last breath of her faithful friend.

When Manuel's story had been told, he was allowed to go on his way to Mexico with Colonel Aguerre's servants, and he quickly set out without a guide, glad to escape in any plight from both the Comanches and the Texans.

It was necessary to bury the body of Eliza Satterlee near the place where she had fallen. A pleasant spot was found, and the grave was carefully concealed, though the trees near it were marked. The bodies of the slain Comanches were left to feed the vultures, and the volunteers, with the recovered captive, took up their line of march toward the south as soon

as possible, as it was not safe to remain in the vicinity of the Comanches.

May had been in Victoria about a week, resting from the bodily and mental exhaustion consequent to her capture, when Placidor presented himself before her, and announced his intention of going to Mexico to get her papers from Colonel Aguerra. She again tried to dissuade him from his purpose, but the Tonkawa was a man of determined character.

"No use to talk, Miss Mayjor," he said. "Placidor must go, and he will get the papers this time."

CHAPTER XIV.

XENIS, THE APACHE.

ABOUT six weeks had passed since the Comanche foray into Texas was terminated by their defeat at Plum Creek.

Under the overhanging hills that looked out upon a vast plain, stretching almost without a break to the Rio Grande, those fierce and formidable nomads were collected in vast numbers. When the chiefs looked upon the hordes of dusky warriors that surrounded them, it was not strange that they, in their ignorance of the numbers and strength of civilized nations, considered themselves the greatest and most warlike people in the world. It was true that the Texans had defeated them, in mass and in detail; but they had always easily overrun Mexico, and had never been seriously worsted in conflicts with regular troops.

The defeat which they had lately sustained at the hands of the Texans had made them very sore, and they had assembled for the purpose of retrieving that disaster and taking vengeance upon their enemies. It was not upon those by whom they had been beaten that they proposed to revenge themselves, but upon those false friends and treacherous allies who had persuaded them to take the field against the Texans, and had then basely left them in the lurch, without attempting to render the aid which they had solemnly promised to the ex-

pedition. It may be that the fact that the Mexicans would prove an easy prey had something to do with this determination ; but there can be no doubt that the breach of faith had made the Comanches very angry, and that they were anxious to punish those who had committed it.

The hundreds of lodges, the numbers of women and children, and the immense droves of horses that were connected with the encampment, made it seem like a vast affair, and helped to swell the exaggerated ideas which the Comanches entertained of their own importance. All was enthusiasm, too ; the women and children, as well as the fighting-men, were in a state of the highest excitement concerning the expedition, and were already enjoying, in anticipation, the sight of the scalps and plunder which the warriors would be sure to bring back from their Mexican storehouses.

The shields and head-dresses and plumed spears that were exposed before the lodges, with the painted and feathered warriors who were wildly careering about the encampment, the moving masses of human beings, the crowds of splendid horses from which the best riders in the world were making their selections, and all the sounds and sights of warlike preparation, made a scene of life and excitement which could not soon be forgotten by its savage participants, and which would long have remained in the memory of civilized beholders, if any such had been there to witness it.

Pinolo and the other war-chiefs harangued their followers after the manner of civilized commanders, enlarging upon their wrongs, and particularly upon the disaster which had been caused by Mexican treachery. It was easy to excite the warriors upon this subject, and still easier to increase the excitement by dwelling on the easy victories they would be sure to gain on the plains of Mexico, and by painting glowing pictures of the scalps and plunder that would fall into their hands, and the boys and girls they would bring back as prisoners to the tribe. All were eager to go on the foray, and the question was not who could be persuaded to join the war-party, but who should be compelled to remain and take care of the women and children and the property of the tribe.

The expedition was fully organized, provisions had been packed, and all arrangements made, and the warriors, num-

bering more than four hundred, were mounted and waiting for the command to march, when a solitary warrior was espied, riding toward the encampment from the west.

As the arrival of the Disinherited Knight caused an excitement among the challengers and spectators at Prince John's tournament, so did the appearance of this one warrior create a commotion among the warlike and unwarlike of the assembled Comanches.

Who and what was he? was the question that was asked on all sides—a question more easy to ask than to answer. It was regarded as certain that he was not a Comanche, as no member of the tribe would have failed to be present at the assembling and to put forward his claims to be allowed to join the Mexican expedition. It was equally certain that his intentions were friendly, as no enemy could approach that mass of warriors so confidently. The march was delayed, and an unusual hush fell upon the encampment, while all awaited, with curiosity which they did not attempt to conceal, the approach of the stranger.

As he came nearer—while he was yet at such a distance that none of his features could be discerned—there were those among the Comanches who gradually made him out. As sailors can confidently decide upon the size, description and nationality of a ship, while only her top hamper is dimly visible above the waves, so did these roamers of the prairie, from signs that would have been imperceptible to other eyes, know that the approaching horseman was an Apache, one of the only nation they fully respected and with which they were not occasionally at war.

The opinions of these men were confirmed when the stranger came yet nearer, and it could be seen that he wore the Apache paint and was dressed in the Apache garb. It could also be seen that he was an old man, with white hair and sallow cheeks, though the wild light that gleamed from his hollow eyes showed that age had not quenched his youthful fire.

He halted at a little distance, and made signs of amity, which was appropriately responded to by the Comanches, who then waited, silently and respectfully, for him to approach and declare his name and purpose.

He stopped when he reached the foremost group of war-

riors, and said that he wished to see Pinolo, the great war-chief of the Comanches.

"Pinolo is here," said that personage, advancing. "My brother is welcome, and the ears of the Comanches are open to his talk."

"I am Xenis," replied the stranger, "a chief of the great Apache nation, whose country reaches from the Yellow river to the great stone lodges of the north. I was once a great war-chief, and have not forgotten how to fight, though the young braves now ask the aid of my counsel, and not of my arm, when they go forth to meet their enemies. Two moons ago my people were at peace with the Mexicans, and a number of our young men, invited by the Mexican chiefs, went down into that country to trade and to hold a peace-talk. Among them were my two sons—my only two sons—and there were not two braver or more skillful warriors in the Apache nation. They were the light of my life, the strength of my years, and besides them there was nothing left to me in the world. While our young men were holding a peace-talk, the Mexicans treacherously and secretly surrounded them with soldiers, and, at a given signal, fired upon them and killed them all. My sons were slain in that massacre, and their blood calls upon me for vengeance. The Apaches are at war with the people of the north, and they can not go to Mexico now. They tell me to wait; but I can not wait. Hearing that the Comanches were angry, and that they meant to go to Mexico this moon, I have come to seek permission to join them. If I can carry back two Mexican scalps to dry in my lodge, I shall be content. The Comanches are my brothers. Shall it be as I say?"

"We have heard of Xenis," replied Pinolo, "and we know him to be a great chief. But my brother is old. It is a long time since he has been on the war-path. It is a long journey, and we must ride fast, and it may be that we shall be obliged to fight those Mexican dogs."

"Xenis is old, but his years have not robbed him of his strength. His eyesight is good and his hand is steady, and he can ride as fast and as far and complain as little as any of the young braves. Let the Comanches take his request into their hearts, and not force him to follow them as the coyote

follows the hunter, to lick the blood of the animals he has slain."

"My brother speaks well," said Pinolo, while a murmur of approval followed the Apache's words. "He shall go with us to Mexico, and he shall not miss an opportunity to take the scalps of his enemies if the Comanches can aid him."

The Apache took the place in the ranks that was pointed out to him, and the savage cavalcade moved southward on its mission of vengeance and plunder.

Xenis, proved that he had spoken truly when he boasted that he could ride as fast and as far as any of the young braves. No fatigue or hardship affected him, and he seemed to carry in his aged frame the strength and endurance, as well as the courage of a young warrior. But during the long journey he was wrapped up in his own thoughts, and kept to himself as much as possible, preserving a silence that was seldom broken. The Comanches, supposing that he was brooding over the loss of his son and his anticipated vengeance, made no unnecessary intrusion upon his reserve, but treated him with the most respectful consideration.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEXICAN MOON.

AGAIN in Mexico, at the hacienda Aguerra

It is October, and the place is sunk in the delicious dreaminess of the autumn weather. An air of the intensest quiet and languor pervades the house and the grounds. It is such a time and such a place as a man who wished to withdraw himself from the world would choose for indulging in a dream of seclusion and tranquillity.

But there is no appearance of tranquillity in the appearance of the proprietor of the hacienda, as he moodily paces the graveled way that leads up to the *patio*, nor is he a man who wishes to withdraw himself from the world. On the contrary, he feels at this moment that he is already too far with-

drawn from the society and protection of his fellow-men, and would gladly be in some more thickly settled locality, surrounded by strong walls and armed men.

His uneasiness was mainly caused by the fact that he had lately heard rumors of an invasion of Mexico by the Comanches—such rumors as were always sure to strike terror to the hearts of the Mexicans, whether near the scene of the savage foray or far from it. There seemed to be, as yet, no foundation for the rumors, and it was probable that the Indians, if they were really on Mexican territory, were at a great distance from the hacienda Aguerra; but he had had some experience of their capacity for rapidly overrunning a country, and knew that it was impossible for him to decide how soon they might reach him, or how far they might be inclined to go. There had been occasions when they had suddenly appeared in force in localities where they were not expected, and when the tide of invasion was not stayed until it had dashed against the battlements of Monterey. So Colonel Aguerra was waiting to hear a confirmation or a denial of the rumors, and to decide upon what he should do.

A man of respectable and dignified appearance came running to him in very undignified haste, and with every symptom of terror. It was Manuel, the major-domo who had “assisted” in the disastrous expedition of Ramon Aguerra to the country of the Comanches.

“What is the matter, Manuel? What has frightened you so badly?” asked Colonel Aguerra, whose countenance showed that he, also, was not free from fear.

“*Los Indios, señor!*”

“They are not upon your heels, I hope. I have heard those flying rumors, and see no reason why we should be frightened out of our wits.”

“But these are not rumors, señor. The reports are true. The Indians are actually in Coahuila.”

“If they are no nearer than that, we need not be alarmed.”

“They come so fast, señor. They move like the wind, and nothing stops them. You do not know where they are or when they will be upon you. There is a fugitive here from the Monsera estate. It was at sunset, he says, when they

heard that the Indians had crossed the Rio Grande. As the *barbaros* were then fully fifty miles away, they were not alarmed, and began to prepare for flight, expecting to leave the hacienda in the morning. Before morning they were surrounded by Comanches. This man escaped, and he was so anxious to reach a place of safety that he could hardly stop to give me the news."

"He was so badly frightened that he has doubtless exaggerated every thing. We will receive the news in time to get away, if they should come in this direction."

"They will surely come, *senor*. If you are within their reach, they will find you and kill you. You can not know how they hate you because of that affair in Texas. They have sworn vengeance upon you, if upon no others. If you had been present at the horrible death of your son, you would know how cruelly they can keep their oath. It is a wonder that those frightful scenes did not make me insane, or at least turn my hair white."

"You were rather gray when you left here, and had not much sense to get rid of."

"You may joke, *senor*, but it was no joking matter to me. The fate of your son is ever in my thoughts, and my dreams are filled with those sights of blood and death."

"You escaped, Manuel, nevertheless."

"But at what a cost of hardship—what peril—what fatigue—what terror! Here is another messenger, *senor*. What news have you, Ola?"

The messenger was a peon belonging to the estate, and his news was, that an express had arrived from the north, bringing the intelligence that the savages had passed the limits of Coahuila, and were pressing on into New Leon. Their numbers were represented as being countless, and they were said to be everywhere, spreading themselves over the country like a plague of locusts, slaying, plundering, burning, devastating the land, as they swept onward like a whirlwind.

"This is getting to be a serious matter," said Aguerre, who was now thoroughly frightened. "We must leave the hacienda at once, Manuel, and abandon every thing to the Indians. We will not stop to pack up, or delay until morning, as Monsera's people did. I will simply take my important

papers and a few other valuables. Do you go and tell the servants to get the horses ready."

"Let me beg that your excellency will make your preparations as speedily as possible," implored Manuel, who was actually trembling with fear, and with his anxiety to put a long distance between himself and the dreaded Indians.

"I will lose no time. If you get ready before I do, you will find me in my private room."

Colonel Aguerre's private room was at a corner of the house, with windows that opened on a veranda and on the garden. His excitement was not so great as to cause him to neglect the precaution of closing and locking the door when he had entered it, as he wished to conceal from prying eyes the manner in which he intended to dispose of the gold and jewels which he had left there.

His first care was for those valuables, and he brought forward the strong box which contained them, and placed it near the wall, from which he drew out one of the stones, disclosing a roomy recess. Into this aperture he hastily crammed the articles which he took from the strong box, and then replaced the stone, which fitted in so accurately that no one would suspect it of ever having been removed.

"That is safe," he said. "It is hard to know that everything must be left to be destroyed by those barbarous Comanches; but, if they burn the house, I can feel that my money and jewels will not be lost."

There were some papers left in the box, and these he took out, examining them before placing them in his pocket.

"This is the land-grant of that cursed Texan," he said. "Ah! if I had a hundred of those Texans here now, we need not fear the Indians; but our people can only fly from them. It was on account of this, and of the girl to whom it belongs, that I lost my son, and that the Comanches have sworn vengeance against me. I fear that it is a fatal document, but I must keep it."

He had folded it, and was about to place it in his pocket, when there was a slight noise in the room that attracted his attention. He turned, and saw an object that filled him with terror and surprise.

The object was an Indian in his war-paint, with a pistol

and a knife in his belt. He was an old and white headed man, but with eyes that were full of fire, and a frame from which the manly strength had not departed. The door was still locked, although a window was open, and Aguerra had not heard the least sound to inform him when or how this strange visitor had entered. The eyes of the Indian were fixed upon the paper which the Mexican held, and his hand was stretched out as if to receive it.

"You must give me that paper," he said, speaking very fair Spanish.

Colonel Aguerra would have cried out and called for help, but his powers of speech were paralyzed by terror, and it was some minutes before he could say any thing.

"Who are you?" he asked. "Where did you come from, and how did you get in here?"

"I have come from Texas, from her to whom that paper belongs, and you must give it to me."

"I will do no such thing. I will call my people, and they will kill you."

"You will not. I came with the Comanches."

"The Comanches! Where are they?"

"Close at hand. I am not one of them, but have come with them to get that paper and to save you. Give me the paper, and I will guide you to a place of safety."

"I will find a place of safety without your help. My horses are ready, and I am about to go. Stand out of my way!"

"You shall not leave this place until I have the paper. Give it to me, and I will take you out of danger. You had better not delay, or it will be too late to escape."

Colonel Aguerra hesitated. He knew that he could not escape from the room, and feared that he would be struck down if he should call for help. His hesitation was suddenly ended by a yell, a series of frightful yells, as if a chorus of demons had assembled to perform the overture to an infernal opera. Following these came cries of terror, shrieks for help, all the alarm and confusion of a panic stricken household.

There could be no mistaking the nature or the cause of these sounds. The Comanches were coming; they were already there; the hacienda was in their possession.

Colonel Aguerra turned to the Indian, and held out his hands imploringly.

"You promised to save me if I would give you the paper," he said. "Will you do it now?"

"I have promised, and I will do what I can. Give me the paper."

Aguerra handed the document to the Indian, who concealed it in some mysterious hiding-place in his apparel.

"Come!" he said, and jumped out of the window, followed by the Mexican.

The house, the garden, the grounds, and the chaparral in the distance, were already crowded with Comanches. Their war-cries, their scalp-yells, their shouts of triumph and of vengeance, rose high above the confused clamor of the Mexicans, who were struck down on all sides, as they vainly endeavored to escape. They could be seen, too, on all sides, swiftly threading the mazes of the shrubbery, and Colonel Aguerra knew that they were searching, above all others, for him.

The Indian led the trembling Mexican through devious ways which were unknown to the master of the hacienda himself, causing him to crouch down in the shelter of trees or bushes when the pursuit came too near, and rising and moving on whenever it seemed safe to do so. Aguerra followed his guide, and obeyed his every word and gesture, with the facility of a well-trained dog.

All precautions were in vain. The attempt to escape had been made a few minutes too late. Some quick Comanche eyes caught sight of a fugitive Mexican, a yell was raised, and at least a score darted in pursuit.

"We must run," said the Indian. "If we can reach the chaparral, there will be a chance for us to hide and get away."

The Mexican strained his sinews in an effort to keep up with his guide. The chaparral was nearly reached, when a party sprung up before them. There was a brief struggle, and both were soon overpowered; the Mexican was bound, and Pinolo had the Indian by the throat, while two braves held his arms.

"What does this mean?" asked the Comanche chief, as he

looked at a mass of white hair that had come off in his hand. "Who are you, Apache? It is the friend of the Texans and our enemy. It is Placidor, the Tonkawa!"

CHAPTER XVI.

VENGEANCE AND CONFIDENCES.

THE eyes of Pinolo gleamed with savage satisfaction when he recognized the features of Placidor. It was with unspeakable pleasure that he saw this formidable enemy of his tribe in his power. Twice had the Tonkawa been captive to the Comanches, and twice had his skill and daring enabled him to escape from their clutches. They knew and respected him as a great warrior, as a man of wonderful resources, of unsurpassed bravery, coolness, sagacity and judgment. It would be no common triumph to take him back to the tribe as a prisoner, and the torture and death of such a warrior would be no common spectacle to the Comanches. The stoicism, the actual heroism with which he would endure whatever fate might be inflicted upon him, would be a splendid example to the young warriors, a gratifying spectacle to the women and children. His capture was the greatest point that the Comanches had made in a long time; it was the crowning glory of their Mexican foray.

Placidor well knew what was passing in the mind of the chief. He knew his importance, and bore himself like a man who had a proper estimate of his own value. He gazed upon his captors proudly, with the air of one who was not to be daunted by any danger, or broken down by any misfortune. A crowd of warriors was soon gathered about him, and he received their admiring glances with the calm self-possession of a monarch who is accustomed to adulation, and regards it as his rightful due.

With the other prisoner the case was quite different, both as regarded himself and his captors. Although his capture had been one of the main objects of the expedition, it was by

no means such a triumph as the possession of Placidor, which was merely incidental and entirely unexpected. The Comanches recognized in him an object of vengeance, and gloated over the opportunity of visiting upon him the hatred that had accumulated in their hearts since their disastrous foray into Texas; but the well-born and well-dressed Mexican was not such a prize to be proud of as the half naked Indian at his side. They would be glad to kill him; but there would be nothing in his death but the mere gratification of their revenge—no splendid example for the warriors, no great moral lesson there.

The appearance and behavior of Colonel Aguerre, also, were widely different from those of Placidor. His countenance was yellower than ever with his dread of the death that awaited him. He knew that it was not to be avoided, but could not bring himself to face it like a brave man. Instead of imitating the placid demeanor and resolute air of the Tonkawa, he cringed to his captors, and would have groveled in the dust before them if they would have allowed him to do so, begging for mercy from men who never had a merciful thought, asking his life of those whose greatest pleasure would be in increasing the agonies with which they should take it from him.

His cowardly behavior and his piteous entreaties, only excited the contempt of the Comanches, and more than one of them spurned him with his foot, uttering words of insult which he was fortunately unable to comprehend. He was securely bound, and led back to witness the destruction of his home.

"If I should lie to you, as you have lied to the Comanches," said Pinolo, in answer to one of his agonized entreaties, "I would tell you that your life is safe, that you shall not be harmed. I would deceive you with false hopes, so as to make your death all the harder and more bitter when it comes. But the Comanches are not Mexicans. Their tongues are straight and they have never learned to lie. You shall die, and you may believe that as surely as you believe that the sun will rise. Your flesh shall feed the buzzards in the Comanche country, and the only grave we shall give you will be the same that we gave your son."

With the capture of the hacienda Aguerre the Comanche foray was terminated. South of them was Monterey, and toward the west the whole country was aroused. They could not go further without finding a region from which the inhabitants had fled, and perhaps encountering an army of Mexican soldiers. They had no fear of the *soldados*, their experience of Mexican armies having been such as to inspire them with no respect or terror; but they had executed the vengeance which was the chief object of the expedition, they had loaded themselves with as much plunder and as many prisoners as they could carry away, and there was no reason why they should expose themselves to even such slight risks as would be involved in a conflict with the military heroes of Mexico. So they called in their scattered parties, and leisurely took up the line of march to their own country.

The Mexicans made a great show of strenuous efforts to intercept and destroy them. Six thousand armed men were sent against them; but the armies, as was usually the case with the Mexican *valientes*, took care to march in the opposite direction to that in which the Indians were to be found, thus preserving their valuable lives and the privilege of boasting of what they would have done if they had met the infamous barbarians. The result of all their marching and countermarching was that the Comanches crossed the Rio Grande in safety, with fewer casualties than they had sustained at the hands of less than half their number of Texans.

They left behind them a sorely stricken land, filled with mourning and desolation; but their own hearts were joyful and triumphant, and their progress was a splendid thing in its way. Their line was lengthened, if not strengthened, by thousands of horses which they had brought from Mexico, many of them loaded with all manner of plunder, which would be missed by its true owners much more than it would be appreciated by its lawless appropriators. Their ranks were swelled, too, by a large number of prisoners, most of them women and girls, whom they were carrying into an almost hopeless captivity, and who might regard their lot as an easy one if it should involve nothing worse than slavery under savage masters.

One captive there was, and only one, who was calm, courageous and defiant, who could be abashed by no insult and depressed by none of the perils of his situation ; but he was an Indian as his captors were, and would make no sign that would give them a chance to gloat over his suffering. This captive was Placidor, whose only anxiety was in connection with the precious paper which he had forced from Colonel Aguerra, and which must be delivered to May Morris if such a thing was within the limit of possibilities.

There seemed to be not the least chance that May would ever be put in possession of that document ; but Placidor had formed a plan by which he believed she would be able to get it. Knowing the Indian character as he did, thoroughly acquainted with their prejudices, their generosities and their ideas of honor, he thought that he could use these characteristics to the benefit of May Morris, if not to his own advantage.

It was not long before he had an opportunity of proving his plans.

Pinolo's wonder had been greatly excited by the capture of the Tonkawa, and with all his puzzling he could not guess how he had found him in such a strange situation. Why had Placidor incurred the great risk of passing himself as an Apache and accompanying the Comanches to Mexico ? Above all, why had he endeavored to aid the escape of Colonel Aguerra, a man to whom he could be bound by no ties of friendship or sympathy, and against whom he knew that the Comanches had vowed a terrible vengeance ?

It was against the principle and practice of the Comanche chief to show his curiosity ; but he turned these questions over in his mind until they actually distressed him. At last, unable to control himself any longer, he confessed his curiosity to Placidor, and asked him to explain those puzzling circumstances.

This was the Tonkawa's opportunity, and he unbosomed himself to the chief, telling him all the particulars of Colonel Aguerra's theft of Major Morris' land-grant, and of his plot against the major's daughter. He went on to give a full account of May's capture and recovery, not omitting to mention his own services in that connection. It was for her sake,

he said, and to recover the property that had been taken from her father, that he had gone to Mexico with the Comanches, and he promised Colonel Aguerra to try to save him if he would give up the paper that was wanted.

Pinolo listened to this recital with evident admiration, and his look plainly said: "What a man is this! What a great warrior! How faithful to his friends, and how true to his word! What friends we should be if we were not enemies!"

Placidor then preferred his request, which was, in effect, that he should be allowed to go down into Texas and deliver to May Morris the document which he had secured at such a cost, on his pledge of honor to return to the Comanches as soon as that mission should be performed, and deliver himself up as a prisoner.

The Comanche listened attentively to this demand, but without suffering his feelings to be seen in his face. The request was not an unreasonable one, and Placidor knew that it was not doubted that he would keep his promise if he should be able to do so. He cheerfully acquiesced, therefore, in Pinolo's decision that he must accompany his captors to the mountains, where the matter would be decided by a council of the war chiefs. Pinolo showed his confidence in the Tonkawa by offering to release him from his bonds if he would promise not to attempt to escape; but Placidor was unwilling to throw away any chances, and was securely guarded until the end of the journey was reached.

Arrived at the mountains, the Comanches conducted Colonel Aguerra to the foot of a lofty cliff, where they showed him the skeleton of his son, picked clean by the buzzards and wild beasts, as a foretaste of the fate that awaited him.

They then took him to the top of the cliff, where, they recounted to him his falsehood and duplicity, and tormented him until he was nearly lifeless from terror. At last, disgusted with his cowardice and self-abasement, and looking upon him as a victim utterly unworthy of their torture, Pinolo gave the order that they should end the scene by putting him to death.

He was seized as his son had been, and in spite of his struggles and shrieks, was shot out into the air, to fall a lifeless and mangled mass, upon the rocks far below.

Placidor viewed these proceedings with indifference, having no sympathy in his heart for the victim of Comanche vengeance. When the scene was ended, he looked for his turn to come next ; but Pinolo, after a brief consultation with the principal chiefs, turned to him and addressed him thus :

“ The Tonkawa has lived a long time among the white men, but we know that his heart is not white. He has served the Texans, but has not learned to lie. He may go to his white friend and complete the work that he promised to do, if he will return to us within one moon.”

“ It is good,” replied Placidor, as unconcernedly as if such a great concession and display of confidence were a mere matter of course. “ Give me a horse and a rifle, and I will go. Within a moon the Comanches will see me again.”

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

AT the house of a friend in Victoria May Morris remained, acting the part of an invalid, and acting it very well. She had scarcely been able to return to the coast, after her rescue from Comanche captivity, and had been so completely prostrated upon her arrival at Victoria, that she was glad to accept the hospitality of the sympathizing friend who took her into her house. She had been so severely tried, in body and mind, by the fatigues and hardships, the perils and anxieties of her captivity, that she had been taken sick, and weeks passed before she was even able to sit up and to walk about her room.

This enforced idleness was irksome to her, although there was nothing else for her to do at that time. The school-house at Linville had been destroyed, the scholars were dispersed, and the grass was growing over the grave of the principal teacher, far away in the wilderness. May's occupation appeared to be gone ; but she was not obliged to look for other employment, as she had accepted an engagement to enter into

partnership with Tom Labar, in the business of husband and wife. The engagement was to be consummated as soon as she should be completely recovered from her illness, and in the mean time Tom, who was occupied in rebuilding his business establishment at Linville, found time to run up and visit her quite frequently, to discuss the details of the matrimonial speculation.

She was wishing for him, and was hourly expecting his arrival, when she was informed that "a gentleman" desired to see her.

"Who is it?" she asked, knowing that it could not be Tom who was so ceremonious.

"It is an Indian," replied her friend, "and he asks for Miss Mayjor."

"It is Placidor. Let him come in at once."

When Placidor entered, his face was beaming with pleasure, which was surely not lessened by the more than gracious manner in which May received her old and faithful friend.

"Where have you come from?" she asked, in that musical Spanish tongue which the Tonkawa loved to hear, and to speak. "I was afraid that you had gone on some dangerous expedition in which you might lose your life, and I can not tell you how glad I am to see you safe."

For answer, Placidor handed her a folded paper.

"What is this?" she asked, as she opened and read it. "Is it my father's land-grant? It surely is. Placidor, have you been to Mexico? Did you get this paper there?"

The spy nodded, and it was evident that he wished her inquiries to terminate at that point; but May was determined to be satisfied. She pressed him with so many questions and so earnestly, that he was obliged to explain that he had accompanied the Comanches to Mexico, where he had seen Colonel Aguerra, from whom he had obtained the paper.

"And so you forced Colonel Aguerra to give it to you?" she asked. "What became of him then? Where is he now?"

"He is dead."

"Did you kill him?"

"The Comanches killed him."

"But you, Placidor—what did the Comanches do with you?"

They found you out, and made you prisoner. You need not deny it; for I know they did. I know, too, that they are your deadly enemies—that they have long sought your life. How is it, then, that you are here?”

If Placidor could have lied, it is possible that he might have told May an untruth. If he had been acquainted with the arts of prevarication and duplicity, he would surely have put them in practice on this occasion, to induce her to believe that he was in no danger; but he was too ignorant for that, and had only his obstinacy to fall back upon.

“You see that Placidor is alive and safe,” was all he would say, and then he endeavored to distract May’s attention from the subject, by speaking of the destruction of the hacienda of Aguerra. He went on to tell her how he had seen her relative concealing gold and jewels, and minutely described the position of the room and of the recess in the stone wall, so that she might find the valuables that were hidden in the ruined house, if she should ever come into possession of her Mexican estate.

Having given her this information, he took his leave, and there was something so solemn in his leave-taking, that it brought tears from May, who earnestly entreated him not to leave the settlements.

“You have done so much for me,” she said, “and you have not yet given me time to thank you as I ought, or to prove to you how grateful I am. I am afraid, too, that something terrible is calling you away, that you have not told me all, that your notions of truth and honor may lead you into some great misfortunes. Wait until Tom comes, and tell him all about it, and let us talk it over together.”

Placidor assured her that everything was as it should be; but May was not satisfied, insisting that he was concealing something from her, and pressing him to remain. He was finally obliged to quit the house quite abruptly, leaving her in tears, and his stalwart frame shook with emotion as he mounted the horse which the Comanches had lent him.

It must be stated here that the Tonkawa was never again seen by May Morris or any other white person. Whether he was put to death by his savage enemies, and with what refinement of torture on their part, and what exhibition of

heroism and endurance on his—whether his skill and daring were again successfully exercised in effecting his escape from their toils—or whether he concluded to accept the offer which his captors were sure to make, and to become one of them—is a question which this history does not pretend to decide. It may be set down as certain that the “untutored savage” vindicated his truth and honor by keeping the promise which he had made to the Comanches, by delivering himself into their hands by the time agreed upon.

May Morris and Tom Labar were married before Christmas, and their fortunes were prosperous from that time forward. By the aid of the document which Placidor had brought her, May’s title to her father’s land-grant was confirmed without much delay, and the lands proved to be very valuable.

The relations of Texas and Mexico were so continually disturbed, that it was for a long time useless for May to assert her claim to her Mexican property. After the termination of the war between the United States and Mexico, she made an effort, which was finally successful, and she was agreeably disappointed by finding Colonel Aguerra’s gold and jewels in the ruined wall where Placidor had told her to look for them.

It may be mentioned, as an evidence that this happy couple did not forget to be grateful, that there was a fine young man in Texas at the opening of the late war, whose name was Robert Placidor Labar.

THE END.

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